

**THE
POEMS
OF
PHILIP
HENRY
SAVAGE**

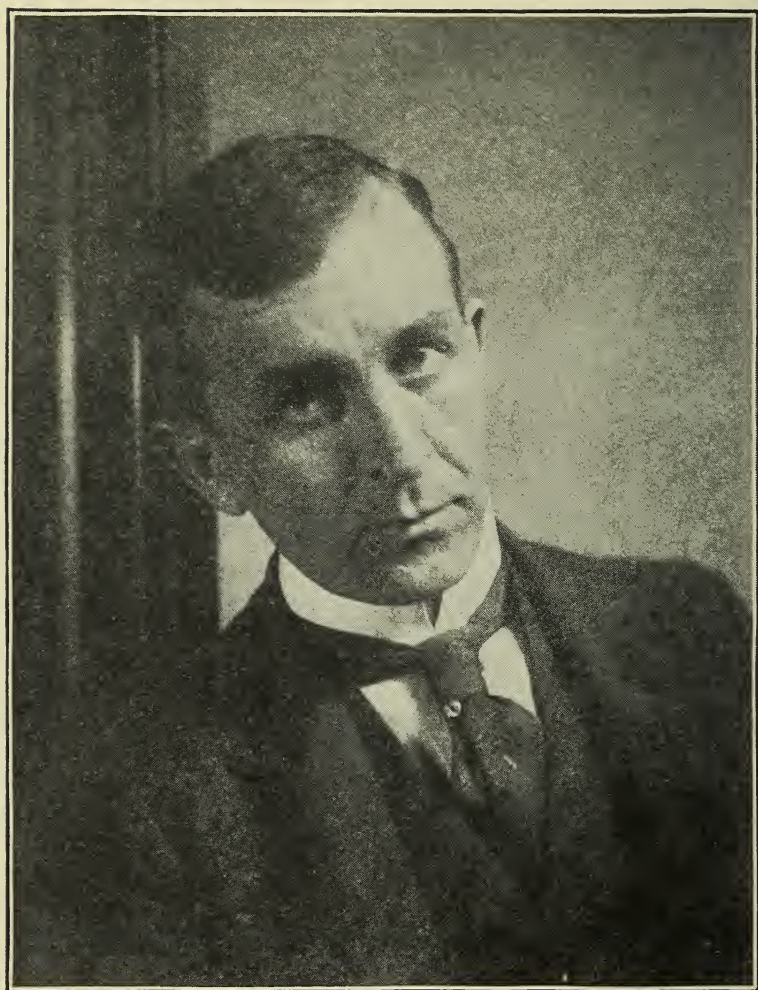
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THE POEMS OF
PHILIP HENRY SAVAGE



C. H. Smay

THE POEMS
OF
PHILIP HENRY SAVAGE

Edited, with an Introduction, by
DANIEL GREGORY MASON



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PREFACE

Philip Henry Savage published, during his lifetime, two small books of verse, FIRST POEMS AND FRAGMENTS, which appeared in 1895, and POEMS, issued in 1898. The present volume is a reprint of these books, with the addition of the best poems found in his portfolio after his death. Of the posthumous poems a few, marred by imperfections of sense or of versification, have been slightly pruned; but omissions have been in each case indicated by asterisks. The reader may rest assured that Savage's intentions have not been tampered with, though it is of course often questionable whether he himself would have considered fragmentary pieces worth printing at all. The Editor's plan has been not to omit a characteristic piece merely because of flaws, nor on the other hand to print anything that does not in some way contribute to the total impression of the writer's personality. Some poems written before the publication of the two books and included in neither, have been admitted because they seemed to contribute to that impression.

The frontispiece portrait is from a negative taken by the Editor during the winter preceding Savage's death. It has been chosen for reproduction here, in spite of its exaggeration of the sadness of his face and its scant justice

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to his good looks, because, on the whole, it gives his expression, at once tentative and serious, rather more vividly than any other. It has much more value as a mental than as a physical portrait.

The Editor wishes to express here his appreciation of the unfailing courtesy and generosity of his friend's family in putting papers at his disposal, and in every way forwarding his work.

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

THERE is no flower so difficult to dissect, so impossible to reconstruct, as the personality of a man. It defies analysis ; as fast as we pluck apart its petals, their perfume exhales and they are left withered in our hands. When I first undertook to write, for the final edition of his poems, a short memoir of Philip Henry Savage, I little realized the elusiveness of the task. It seemed easy and pleasant to communicate to others my deep and lasting impression of my friend. But soon I found that his friendship was a possession I could not share, his gentle, strong personality a presence in my life that was after all incommunicable. His feminine perception, so sensitive to beauty and so rich in tact ; his courageous manliness, daring to probe the grimest places in life ; his pure ardency of spirit ; his gayety and quaintness of humor ; his wide hospitality of mind ; his stern and yet pagan personal ideal : all these elements made up a personality that might perhaps be suggested, but never could be livingly reproduced. He was young when he died ; he developed slowly ; his last year of life, when his poetic faculty was much more perfect than ever before, was a time of distraction and anxiety : so that even his poetry, a mirror of his very self for those who knew him, reflects him for others but brokenly and vaguely. But if I cannot hope that the most discerning

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reader will discover completely the man behind the poems, yet my task here must be to aid, however slightly, such a quest. I shall outline in the following pages the salient features of Savage's mind and spirit, — features which, combined as nature knew how to combine them, revealed one of the best men I have known.

At first meeting, one saw that Savage was a man of refinement and of personal dignity, that he cherished ideals and respected himself. He seemed what we call a quiet man, though he always talked enough and with grace; his presence was bright and cheerfully courteous rather than brilliant. Gradually, deeper qualities revealed themselves. His steady blue eyes reassured one, his slender yet vigorous figure gave one a sense of manliness and fidelity. His face, with its rough-textured skin, well creased and of a sallow or ashen color, reinforced the impression of strength, and suggested, in spite of its mobility, a physical temperament of the melancholy type. Yet, so shifting were his moods and so responsive his features, an instant could turn sadness into expectancy, or fill the serious eyes with banter. His mind seemed to demand of his body a greater pliancy of expression than had been given it, its proper quality being strength rather than delicacy. In spite of the sensitiveness that was clearly written on every feature, it might be said that he would have been physically almost apathetic had he not been mentally so alert. And his talk emphasized the same contradiction. Though his voice was dull and unvibrant, and his enunciation indistinct, his pleasure in talking was so obvious, and his quaint doublings and sudden interjections and apostrophes and parentheses and self-interruptions so novel and characteristic, that

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one loved to listen to him. Nor must I forget his little mannerisms and airs,—how he would cuff one foot against the other as he stood in the doorway, in deprecation or mock apology; how he would throw one hand into the air with a sudden exclamation; how in an evening walk, giving no warning, he would suddenly deafen us with a wild and hollow Indian war-whoop. In a thousand ways he had a knack of making his moods real to others, of enlivening them with his curious and lovable whims.

But Savage's social charm is interesting to us here chiefly because, like a vapor that exhales from a volatile liquid, it suggests what deeper quality permeated his mind and gave it its flavor. In the analysis we have promised ourselves, the first consideration must be this deeper quality of sensitiveness.

His every word and act was a revelation, now superficial, now profound, of his really feminine purity and delicacy of perception. It spoke alike in his quick sense of the moods of others and in his most exalted delight in natural beauty, though perhaps the latter was its more primal expression. One cannot read three pages of his book without seeing what a passionate disciple the beauty of the world found in him. His first word is

“Even in the city, I
Am ever conscious of the sky”;

and he returns to the same thought in the six lines that introduce the posthumous poems:

“Not all the world can banish from my eyes
The simple glories of the day's sunrise;

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Not circumstance nor fate e'er drive away
The clear perfection of one summer day,
Nor blot quite wholly from my sight
The singing tumult of the mystic night."

The accuracy of his insight is unfailing; and whether he describes the forest which "through rain is green as it was ne'er before," or the early winter sun which "lays by every stem a hue most sagely, delicately blue," his page always reflects the object with fidelity and with the finest precision. Even the *First Poems and Fragments*, prosaic and diffuse as they often are, frequently charm us with a touch of this delicate observation. And his note-books and letters are full of scribbled memoranda that want only manipulation to make them into poems. Here is a botanical note in verse, found in the portfolio :

"Sand hill violets are pale
Like the sunny innocents,
Like the evening primrose frail,
Wanting wholly the intense
Azure of the cousin-flower that stands
In the fertile bottom lands."

And in letters I find the following characteristic bits of description :

"There is a little family of two — sparrows — nested in a sheltered angle of the water-spout on the house opposite my side-window ; not thirty feet from me now. They are companions of mine, chirping early and late ; happy ; waiting for the eggs to hatch. . . . Busy, busy, busy, about the fundamental things. N'est-ce pas ?"

"I just had the finest hour of the autumn. I rode from Cambridge, in this wild wind out of the sunset ;

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and I'm going back after dinner, and home again at eleven. The Harvard Bridge is a rare spot, and the ducks like the river as well as I."

The half-boyish delight he took in the world of out-of-doors was so highly characteristic of him (little as it seems to comport with the sombre tone of his verses, so full of an Omar-like sense of the fleetingness of life) that it deserves illustration in a longer letter describing a July day on Mirror Lake in Wolfborough :

"DEAR — : We were up at three. At 3.05, though the room was so light I needed no candle to dress, I could not distinguish my red (right) garter from my black (left), which surprised me. A whippoorwill shouted busily, just under my window. He, besides the frog which sings all night long 'u-ung' like Neddie, is the only distinctive night-bird. We were on the lake an hour before sunrise, which was to-day at 4.29. The white lilies were unopened as I paddled the canoe among them. Shortly after venturing out irregular twitterings began in the low copse where the high white eastern light penetrated. The hills, Ossipee, began to show a glowing purplish hue. A bank of cloud over the sun (below the horizon) grew rosy with a sharp infusion of dust-color. From that time on this cloud was the centre of attention, and its whole progression was from the color named above through ever more brilliant golden rose, to so sharp and hot a metal that even before the edge of the sun himself appeared it was dazzling and overpowering to the eye.

"Troops of white mist came out of the shallow bay and moved in procession like the spirits among whom Fran-

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cesca was borne, down the lake in ever-diminishing line. They were a continual presence till long after the sun appeared, whether we turned to watch the bream on their nests under the shallow wake, or noted how the yet white light refracted into varying color on clouds and hills. Then through the flashing lights the fire itself was born.

“Roll down, roll down, O night-enfolded, dewy earth,
And wash thee clean in the east where the crystal waves
of light
Sweep from the mystical deep to the roseate throes of birth,
Wake and redeem and transfigure the children of night.

.

“The afternoon saw a tramp through a sphagnum swamp, sleep, and the completion of a further arc of the shore. The evening twilight was soft and gray, through a curtain of clouds ; with color, yellow and saffron to rose, to the west of Ossipee toward the Sandwich Mountains. Supper on a sand-beach facing west ; and after, a long contemplation, while the fagots crumbled and fell. We left a little rosy heap on the sands, shining in the face of the late twilight. It was dark when we reached the plank wharf ; we had taken seventeen hours to go round the lake two and a half miles.

.

“Oceans, awake ! and hills ; ye lakes and slumbrous valleys,
Over ye all and the city’s roofs, and the darkened town,
Through the empurpate air from the wealth of his aureate
chalice,
Lo ! the sun has poured a magical influence down.

Hooray !

PHILIP.”

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As would be expected, Savage's sensitiveness to natural beauty involved pain as well as pleasure, in so far as he was constrained to an artificial and "civilized" life. There resulted a disharmony which he recognized now laughingly, now with sorrow. The reader cannot but have been struck with the undertone of sadness in the lines already quoted from the posthumous poems; and the same distaste of drudgery is quaintly voiced in a stray quatrain:

"Brick sidewalks and the stony street
Make weary walking for the Muse.
I cannot blame her halting feet; —
God knows they were not meant for shoes."

Equally whimsical and equally sincere is a plaint Savage wrote from his office in the Public Library during alterations made there one muggy August:

"DEAR — : Observe the commercial method of dating this sheet, and realize the pace at which I began it. I now breathe three times and start anew.

"You cannot write too often. I love your letters, if I may say so; and you can have no idea how they come like a strain of music across the dull blows of iron hammer on granite which are the trunk and branch of the vibrations I hear. In the Library, truly, where plaster and granite-dust float like a palpable, visible atmosphere, the heavens and the earth (forgive me) are one flour."

The same sensitiveness that made Savage so responsive to natural beauty gave him a very tender sympathy with people. All his friends remember how prehensile he was,

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how he never obtruded his own mood, but felt about for the mood of his companion. He had the liveliest interest for our fortunes and misfortunes, and his counsel, though always bracing and tonic, was never hard or self-blinded. His sympathy with men does not voice itself in the poems, to be sure, so eloquently as the scarcely less personal sympathy he felt with nature. He himself writes regretfully :

“I keep with loving eye and ear
Attention on the changing year.
I cannot bid in numbers flow
The human passions that I know ;
Nor weave into the lyric line
The sacrificial heart divine ;
Be mine the shame, the burden mine.”

But even if the self-impeachment shadow a truth, it is a partial truth, and one far less applicable to his later than to his earlier work. In one of the poems to “G. S.” there is keen appreciation of the “sacrificial heart divine,” even if the lines into which it is woven lack something of lyric fire. And in the poem beginning “Day by day along the street,” written several years later, the beauty of the style matches the tenderness of the emotion. The love-poems at the end of the book, also, are an earnest of what he might have done in this sort, had he lived.

But if we do not find that Savage’s delicate perception failed him at any point, this does not mean that adverse criticism is not both possible and necessary. It is possible, because like others he had the defects of his qualities : it is necessary, because faults are the natural shadows that give body to virtues, and a portrait painted with high

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lights alone will show a mere Sir Charles Grandison, both flat to look at and unprofitable to contemplate. Savage's mind, then, like many minds that act chiefly by intuition, was weak in logical power, unable to develop a long train of thought with sequence and coherence. His conversation was scrappy and unmortared; he brought out his thoughts singly, with little reference to what had just been said; minds that were strong where his was weak found talk with him baffling and unsatisfying. On the other hand, for those who did not demand sustained grasp, but accepted insight in its stead, he talked always with charm, and often persuasively. Like the heroine in the fairy story, his mouth dropped diamonds, and they were not less bright because they did not form a necklace. His exclamations and interjections and sudden turnings were delightful to us; we used to rejoice in his "asides," self-admonitory or abusive. "Tut, tut, Savage," he would cry, in the midst of something else, and cuff his feet together. Non-sequaciousness, however, was no doubt a more serious handicap to him in his writing: it was the infirmity which circumscribed his work to the short lyric form he cultivated with such success; every effort he made in the direction of larger outlines or more ambitious schemes was disappointing. He could not sustain and vitalize a long poem. Thoughts would not stay dissolved in his mind, but quickly formed into isolated crystals. They were perfect, but they were small. Still, it would be foolish to insist too much on the negative aspect. We have only to reverse our emphasis to see that, even if they were small, they were perfect. And then we shall accept Savage as a miniaturist, a worker in precious stones, just as we have accepted Her-

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rick and other kindred geniuses, not demanding of them a breadth of which they are incapable.

The reader should not infer, either from what I have said of Savage's logical shortcomings, or from my insistence upon his basically feminine qualities of mind, that there was about him any trace of the effeminate, any tendency to the feeble or the flabby. His weaknesses were intellectual rather than sentimental. They were the negative weaknesses of limitation, not the positive weaknesses of morbidness or sentimentality. Manliness reveals itself in sanity and balance of mind as well as in the main force we generally associate with it, and his manliness was of this sort, giving his smallest poems a tone of such solidity and health that we may without paradox apply to them the word "large." If a man have healthy and governed sense, his mental processes may be as intuitive as a woman's and we shall only admire the more that rare interaction of powers that produces an individuality at once finely sensitive and thoroughly wholesome. And if we needed any further testimony than we have in his poems that Savage's sensuous appreciations were thus made wholesome by a steady spiritual control, we could find it in a formulation of the principle of such control which he gives in his note-book.

"In order to enjoy life," he says, "one must be a master of life. In order to enjoy the senses one must be a master of them. No ordinary pleasure is so great but its rejection serves to throw out into relief this greater; no task so stern but that endurance is sterner; no pain so fierce but it wakes the soul to secret laughter.

"In another mood, the kiss of the senses is beautiful beyond all and every abstraction; the touch of sunlight,

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the glory of form and color, the magic of sound, the joy of human embraces, the passion of sex.

“These two moods are the great rhythmical heart-beat, the systole and diastole of human life. The one a gathering of materials from all the realms of beauty, the other a consumption of them to feed the most perfect flame. The one centrifugal, the other centripetal.”

If Savage was feminine in his appreciation for beauty, if he was feminine also in his logical and constructive limitation, he was masculine in healthiness and normality of sense, and he was nobly masculine in that sort of spiritual enthusiasm which made him hold himself above the very gratifications that appealed so potently to one-half his nature, in order to give a perfect allegiance to its central authority.

Such is a brief analysis of the permanent and stable characteristics of the man. Now that it is made, however, we see only the more clearly that any such static analysis, especially of a personality so fluid, so evolving, so dynamic as Savage's, must be in the end unsatisfying. More characteristic of him than any trait that we can describe was the lapse, the flow, the ceaseless recrystallization of traits. His growth was not uniform, as in men of less quickness of mind, but many-sided, various, and unforeseen, like the ramifications of ice-crystals on a window-pane. So impressible was he, his development was almost as complex as the outer influences affecting him. He reacted on his environment, as the learned say, with unusual delicacy. Furthermore, he added to this native impressibility the habit of pondering his impressions. Meditation shaped his life nearly as much as circum-

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stance. Very remarkable was his intellectual alertness; he analyzed his feelings, returned upon his experiences, and perennially chewed the cud of introspection. Whether to dwell in the country or in the city; whether to mix with people or to take much solitude; whether to be a pagan or a Christian; what to renounce and whether to renounce anything, — these were problems that he recognized and grappled. Of the tirelessness of his thinking the jottings and memoranda in his note-books give a forcible impression. I select a few examples almost at random :

“I must break up my year into sections, and live according to season.

“Study the map for a tramp.

“I never take a step in the woods but I stop, jealous of advance, lest I lose some part of the joy and significance in beauty of each outward movement. Mystery and unexplained delight.

“Don’t waste your spirit in impatience.

“I thought of Thoreau, and took my courage tight between my teeth.

“Every morning now I ought to sit at my desk.

“Now is the time to begin to walk, and with the note-book. Remember that hawk, and the ease with which the thoughts took form with him in sight — all gone now, alas !

“A continual quick shift between vital personal relationships and verse.

“Master of a little beauty which, because it is born and bearer of the divine essence, I will cherish at the expense of most of the concerns of life.”

Savage’s outward actions, again, bear witness to the same combination of sensibility and introspection, pro-

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ducing his characteristic eclecticism. They were very various, and their variety resulted not from confusion or from deficient self-control, but from a deliberate desire to live sensitively, responsively. His idea was to trust the ultimate harmony of his instincts; each was to be obeyed as it revealed itself, and all were to produce an unconstrained evolution. From day to day he faced and interrogated the bewildering complex of a youth's experience: observing, comparing, recording; conversing, reading, pondering; experimenting, practising, attempting. All his doings, at first sight surprisingly diverse, fall, when looked at as illustrating this eclecticism, into the unity of a series of educative experiences. Each was dictated by some inward necessity, some craving to be satisfied, some knowledge to be supplied, some weakness to be trained into strength.

Born in 1868, he did not enter Harvard College until 1889, that is, until he was already of age, but spent the years from '86 to '89 in business. For these three years he was what is technically known as a "drummer" of boots and shoes. He wrote home to his family, from remote towns in Maine or Pennsylvania, long letters in which news of the shoe business is oddly mingled with descriptive bits about sunsets and red-winged blackbirds. Of course the life was ultimately impossible for him, and getting from it a good deal of experience of some kinds of people he gave it up and entered college. Here he was shy and quiet, studious, friendly with but a few fellows of tastes like his own. He had developed little of the social skill which marked him later; he was thinking out the problems of the conduct of life, and of his art, literature. So seriously

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did he take the former that for a year after graduation he studied divinity. Several of his sermons have been saved, — compositions which afford glimpses of his courage and manliness, through an atmosphere of conventional and rather prosaic piety. It was fortunate for him that he abandoned this profession. Though undoubtedly his ethical enthusiasm would have found expression in it, his mind was both too pagan and too original to attain free play in any organization; he was foreordained an intellectual free-lance. His next venture was more native. Becoming what he called a vagabond, he lived a free and outdoor life, a life of loving study of sky and forest as well as of books and men. That this life agreed with him we may assume from the appearance, in 1895, of his *First Poems and Fragments*.

Yet the other side of his nature, what I may call the moral side, soon demanded that he again relate himself to society by some more recognized service than poetry. He set about discovering how he might earn bread without sacrificing that other intangible possession that we are told is equally necessary to life. He strove faithfully to combine bread-winning with ideal-winning, or, in the expressive commonplace, to “keep body and soul together.” He wished to be a worthy citizen of society, and yet he saw not how to be one without treason to his highest interests. It is a dilemma with which idealists are familiar. In all the rest of his life he was assaulting and reassaulting it, using against it all the ingenuity and courage and patience and hope he had, and leaving it unsolved when he died.

In '95-'96 he was an assistant instructor in English at Harvard, carrying on at the same time graduate

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courses in composition and literature. The next year he was about to accept a similar post at the Institute of Technology, when he was offered the position of Secretary to the Librarian of the Boston Public Library. This he accepted, and held until his death three years later, working to such good effect that in 1899 he was made Clerk of the Corporation, and still managing in spare hours to produce the small but perfect book, the *Poems* of 1898. On the last day of May, 1899, he was suddenly taken with appendicitis, and after an illness of less than a week, died on June 4th, at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

It is easy enough to point out the disadvantageous effect of Savage's quicksilver-like mobility upon his life. He was not safeguarded by the usual limitations of interest from dissipating his energies. He cared so deeply for so many things that it was difficult for him to concentrate his forces on one undertaking. He read very widely, and blamed himself that he did not go even farther afield. All sorts of life appealed to him. At heart he desired, I think, to be at once a poet, a man of action, an athlete, a philosopher, a man of the world or of society, and a solitary thinker. He never brought himself to sacrifice all activities but one. Yet, although success is difficult to him who will not accept such a sacrifice, the very sensitiveness of enthusiasm that made Savage unable to give up anything is itself noble. It is his strength as well as his weakness. Without it he might have accomplished more; it is questionable whether he would have been as much.

If Savage's note-books and the events of his life show thus clearly the impressibility and the habit of self-

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consideration that combined to make him eclectic, his poetical work is a third and even more striking testimony. The astonishing improvement found on comparing his first with his second volume was the fruit of conscious effort. It proceeded from a ceaseless exercise of taste, which is a faculty dependent on permeability to impressions and the habit of reflecting upon them. It is interesting to find Savage, while still in college, discovering for himself, and writing to his younger sister, that "what is true and beautiful is absolute ; and what is stupendous and gorgeous and impressive and wonderful is inferior to it." It is interesting to find him awaking to the error of his first conceptions of literary art, and feeling out, at first helplessly, for sounder methods. In the autumn of 1895 he writes to a friend :

"DEAR ——— : I am the most unhappy man of men ! Because I see, though this only now and again, how hopelessly weak was my ancient theory, that genius might be left to train itself, that original power in a man could express itself without education. You know that I practically believed that.

"To-day I am taking English 5, 2, and Anglo-Saxon in Cambridge, and marking special reports in English 9. My realest reason for going back was because I wanted to take some strong medicine, to take ———'s censures with my eyes open, and find if I could not come out from under the cloud.

"Do you know what I mean by 'cloud' ? I feel sometimes as though it were choking me, — I see other men in full career, coherent, strong, fluent, their power of expression running even with their conception —

INTRODUCTION

while I labor and fail. The paltry inspiration that is in some of the *First Poems* does not comfort me. Where are power and beauty? Where, indeed, are simple purity and grace? Why, I hate most of those pieces! And yet I cannot see beyond them, nor take any clear step onward. I feel (again) like a man in the jungle; the ground under foot is a tangle of grass, the way ahead a tangle of vine and branch, the sky overhead obscured by the closely set tops of trees. I thought to fly over it all; to-day I must cut my way, and I have only a poor pen-knife! This is sincere, I do not anticipate any denial on your part, nor crave it. If I learn wisdom as the year goes by, I'll write it out and send you."

We know from his later work that Savage did in time learn wisdom, did find "simple purity and grace," but it was only by indefatigable application of his native taste. It will be interesting to analyze his progress in some little detail.

The evolution in his work is of two kinds: the advance in style from diffuse prosaicism to crystalline compactness, and the advance in thought from traditional theology to the independence and originality and courage of such pieces as "Believe in me" and "God, Thou art Good." The advance in style, in a sense the more important, since he was a lyrist rather than a thinker, he made by applying to everything he wrote his naturally keen sense for diction. How delicate and ardent was his love for words! He notes in his journal Thoreau's passion for the crystalline words in the language, such as "serene" and "ethereal"; it was a passion he shared. One summer he ransacked the first letters of the diction-

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ary, growing as enthusiastic as a child with a new toy at the discovery of such words as "azure," "alert," "aura," "ashen." When a friend sent him a sprig of everlasting, with a comment on the dignity of the words "everlasting" and "morning," he wrote a new stanza for his poem *Processional* in order to introduce them. A sentence in his note-book suggests the source of many of his own finest effects: "The gracious quality of beauty comes like a bloom on words simple and specific." As time went on, he adopted a more and more laborious mode of composition, bringing a rigorous self-criticism to bear upon his originally keen instincts. His later note-books are webbed and networked with revisions and variants. It is surprising to see him developing one of his perfect couplets out of a weak, commonplace germ. Two examples must suffice. The last couplet of *March 20*,

"Praise God I see them and can say,
Another year, another day!"

was at first

"And I some little time will stay
And mark them as I do to-day."

And from the comically prosaic lines

"Thus covertly, and day by day,
My hours advance, my hair turns gray,"

grew the plain and noble couplet in the last stanza of *Fagots*,

"Thus covertly, and term by term,
Like as the year, I grow infirm."

INTRODUCTION

By such means, testing and rejecting and deliberating and revising, he gave his verse its fine compression, its elegance of phrase, its harmony of tone and symmetry of proportion.

Equally great, though less noticeable, was the advance he achieved in thought. Very open and fearless must be the mind which can in a few years think itself out of a stereotyped conventionality in belief and a shy isolation in action, into an independent, humane philosophy, and a gracious, cordial intercourse with men. Savage's invaluable habit of getting face to face with his impressions and interrogating them with unprejudiced curiosity vitalized his entire intellectual life, and disentangled him from tradition, to found him firmly upon truth. But further insistence on a fact so obvious is unnecessary. No reader can doubt Savage's originality, his mental self-dependence. What might be doubted by some is the efficacy of his beliefs, their fundamental worth for the purposes of life. Many people are fond of saying that all the results of a young man's untrammelled thinking are "very pretty, but unpractical," meaning useless in the stress of experience. Such thinking, they affirm, leads to opinions charming enough as conversational and literary ornaments, but hollow and brittle for any ultimate uses of the spirit. Savage's did not prove so. When he came to his early death, and it was necessary to leave his unfinished work and the friends he loved, he found his truth still true, and could reconcile death with the philosophy life had given him.

If we can fix our eyes, not on his fragmentary doings and his imperfect work, in which he shares the lot of all, and on his untimely death, which has the look of a

INTRODUCTION

peculiarly cruel and empty fatality, but rather on his steady allegiance to ideal aims, on the quenchless courage with which he lived and died, we shall feel that he achieved his end after all, and that he does not so much need our pity as command our gratitude. For he was one of the faithful. He labored without misgiving, and when he had to die laid down his life with the same spirit of trust that had been his strength in meeting it. His friends, and those who can divine what he was, will in their thought of him quickly come to forget the incompleteness of his life and the insufficiency of his expression, and remember only that he is one of that great company whose faith and faithfulness have served the ideal.

D. G. M.

Boston, November, 1900.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS



A. D. MDCCCXCV

TO GERTRUDE SAVAGE

*A winding water onward flows,
And whither, only ocean knows;
Happy the crystal source that lies
Reflecting in its heart the skies.*

APOLOGY

BE more concrete, immediate to man!
So did he counsel me, the sage; and I,
Taking for naught the gentle guidances
Of nature, who in all my life before
Had lived unconscious, leaving much to her,
I cast her out; so I forgot the sky
And turned my eyes into the heart of man.
But poetry is a swift, unconscious growth,
Springs native where it may, and ever lives
The child of impulse unaware and wild;
And passion many times must rise and fall
And much of life be lived before the word
Spring up to utterance and demand a birth.
So was I barren many days and so
I doubted him, the sage and moralist;
Therefore at last I claimed again the days
When I was not so much and nature more,
When beauty rose, if beauty it were, and clothed
A happy impulse or a strong desire
In forms and colors native to the time.

SHORTER POEMS

I-XXVIII



I

'T IS grace to sing to nature, and to pray
The God of nature, out of His large heart,
To grant us knowledge of His human way;
This is the whole of nature and of art.

II

EVEN in the city, I
Am ever conscious of the sky;
A portion of its frame no less
Than in the open wilderness.
The stars are in my heart by night;
I sing beneath the opening light,
As envious of the bird; I live
Upon the pavement, yet I give
My soul to every growing tree
That in the narrow ways I see.
My heart is in the blade of grass
Within the courtyard where I pass;
And the small, half-discovered cloud
Compels me till I cry aloud.
I am the wind that beats the walls
And wanders trembling till it falls;
The snow, the summer rain am I,
In close communion with the sky.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

III

WHEN I look on Ossipee
Not the hill alone I see;
Not the hill I see to-day
Fair and large and distant gray,
But a mountain richly bright,
Shining with eternal light.
Fashioned in a fearful past,
Born to be while life shall last,
Yet I fear thee not, but know
Thou shalt ever with me go.
I shall see thee, I shall find
The vision ever in the mind,
Given to me one happy hour
And received by me in power;
I shall never know the day
When thy touch has passed away;
For thy spirit, Ossipee,
Has become a part of me.

IV

UPON a pasture hill a pine-tree stands
And in the air holds up its slender hands;
A double sheep-track turns beneath the tree,
Dips to the firs, and seeks the meadow lands.

SHORTER POEMS

The sun is setting ; slowly, one by one,
Faint breaths of wind along the branches run ;

The quiet of the hills is on the air
And on the earth beneath a quiet sun.

In contrast with the sky a gray stone wall
Is black beneath the orange light ; and all

The earth is black ; never so black the earth
As underneath a sunset sky in fall.

The pine-tree's plummy branches make a net
And hold the light of heaven ; and nearer yet,

Cold in the unfeatured blackness of the ground,
Up-springs a ray from some hid rivulet,

Deep in the pasture hummocks at my feet ;
I hear its icy ripple, low and sweet ;

No other sound ; but in the air, unheard,
I hear the pulse of winter coldly beat.

V

WHAT know I of the fields of fall,
The autumn days beyond the town ?

I do not hear the harvest-call,

I do not see the pastures brown ;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

The upland sloping to the down,
With corn-shocks leaning on the wall;
And golden ground-fruit shining through it all.

They tell me of the violet
Upon the hill, bare at the crest;
Of the autumnal primrose set
Deep where the banks protect it best;
Of summer fallow fields now drest
In green; of meadows deep and wet;
Ah! I have seen and I shall not forget!

Where stubble-fields give way to fern
In meadows where the water lies,
I've seen the sharp-flamed sumac burn
And flash its fires before my eyes.
Faint pictures of the river rise
With blowing mist beyond the turn;
Of lean November forests bare and stern.

I once have seen; and all the kind
Stood round me in that happy year;
In one bright impulse of the mind
I was the centre of the sphere;
The spring and summer centred here
On autumn; winter stood behind
And beckoned, whispering in the smoky wind.

SHORTER POEMS

VI

THE sea is silent round this rocky shore;
The forest wind
From the loud level beach behind
Brings rolling up the distant water's roar.

Silent the wheeling sea-gull in the air,
Without a cry;
Far off beneath the bending sky
A silent ship goes down the ocean stair.

The sea is blue, the sky is white with cloud,
The land is white;
The seaward rocks are shining bright,
Enwrapped in a white, salt, and icy shroud.

The weeds and bushes bare above the snow,
Against the sun
Hold up brave stems, and many a one
Has February bits of bud to show.

Where roses grew in one wild garden-close
I pulled away
A pair of rose-hips for to-day;
Memorial to the mistress of the rose.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

VII

WHEN February sun shines cold
There comes a day when in the air
The wings of winter slow unfold
And show the golden summer there.

Dead ivy on the winter wall
Is glowing with an April light ;
And all the wreckage of the fall
Above the snow comes into sight.

By a green rock beneath the pines
Are shadows blue along the snow.
Above the silent sun the lines
Of cloud in white procession go.

A bloom is on the forest tops
Of red light bursting through the brown.
The ice awakes, and silver drops
Come through the meadow stealing down.

The sky is hushed ; beneath the trees
Where silentness and night have birth,
I heard the sunset whisper, Peace !
Peace, Peace ! the gods are on the earth.

SHORTER POEMS

VIII

STILL, in the meadow by the brook I lay
And felt the April creep along my streams,
Subdue my currents to herself and play
At hide-and-seek with winter in my dreams.

Rich in the summer day the time is rife
With all an eager fancy will contrive ;
But April welcomes each new shock of life
The sluggard winter from the heart to drive.

Thus did I tremble at the passing bird,
Leaped in the sun and with the breezes ran,
My heart a brook, and all my life a word
To tell how near to nature is a man.

IX

IN the first pale flush of even
When the sun is hardly down,
Ere the stars are in the heaven,
Ere the shadows turn to brown ;

When the eastern sky is darkened
And the zenith still is blue,

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

I have stood and dimly hearkened
To the falling of the dew.

I have stood within the hollow
By low, rolling hummocks made,
Close beside a sloping fallow
In the bottom of a glade,

While the west was slowly dying;
And the dark east followed fast,
Swarming over, swiftly flying
Till the world was overcast,

Downward, past the dim horizon
Till the valley filled with night,
And the cool earth-whisper rising,
Filled me with a wild delight!

Let the day go by to even.
Hark! the distant vespers' toll.
When the sun is set in heaven
It is sunrise in the soul.

X

WHEN evening comes and shadows gray
Steal out across the glimmering bay
And tremble in the air between;

SHORTER POEMS

When evening comes and shadows green
Are shaken down across the moor
From willow-trees along the shore ;

When evening stoops across the hill
Towards the sunset glowing still
And fills the hollow glens with shade ;

When evening gathers in the glade ;
And all the little beasts now run
That erst were hidden from the sun ;

Then do I hear the footsteps fall
That bitter day hears not at all ;
Then is the sunset like a door
That leads me on to more and more,
Till in the quietness of night
I find a freedom and a light
Eternal such as nowhere glows
From any sun that ever rose.

XI

WITH all the soul within me and suppressed
Before the sunset, heard I, and confessed,
A breath of God from out the whispered hand
Held o'er the lips of the great speaking west.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Heard it, and all the soul within me burned !
Heard it, and wondered at the secret learned ;
And all the busy accidents of life
O'erwhelmed it then ; it never has returned.

Thus once the doors of heaven wide open stand ;
The voice is heard, of promise or command ;
Is seen the gleam ; and then the portals close
And nature grows again upon the land.

XII

I LOVE to walk against the yellow light,
The lemon-yellow of the first daylight,
When cold and clear above the frozen earth
The white sun rises far down to the right.

And then to think of life is very sweet ;
The shackles fall and drop about one's feet ;
Till in the clear forgetfulness of morn
It seems the world and life are all complete.

SHORTER POEMS

'T is good to be forgotten and forget ;
To look upon the sun and so beget
 A golden present, and a past that 's free,
A little time, of memory and regret.

And when one strikes and stumbles on a stone,
And turns to find the wingèd fancies flown —
 Yet through the passages of life that day
Will run a radiance other than its own.

XIII

THE flash of sunlight from a bit of glass
Has often power to stop me as I pass ;
And when I turn into the burning west
I fling me down upon the sunny grass,

Silent. I tell not all the little things
That fly to me and give my spirit wings ;
 The black-eyed bird, the cloud, the silver leaf,
The valley wind that passes as it sings.

And when the sun descending from the height,
Seeks in the sunken west the bath of night,
 Wrapped in the darkling mantle of the sky
I wander forth and seek a new delight.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XIV

THE influences of air and sky
Are side lights from the eternal throne
That fall upon the watchful eye
Of him who silent waits, alone,
And crown him master of his own.
He knows the beauty of the rose;
The central sun, the farthest star he knows.

The balance of a blade of grass,
The winds that in the meadows run,
Gathering incense as they pass
To offer to the thronèd sun;
The trembling secret to be won
From every running stream; all these
Are his, yet force him, silent, to his knees.

The watcher shall possess the earth
In silence, leaping to control
In moments mighty with the birth
Of passion, when the eternal soul
Shall wholly bind him to the whole.
The air, the sky, the winds, the rose,
Are his; the earth, and God Himself he knows.

To H. F. L.

SHORTER POEMS

XV

ALARK flew by upon the air
And struck a red leaf from the tree,
There where he lighted; and a pair
Of robins bore him company.
And I, I looked across the lea,
Across the autumn uplands bare,
Then turned again and saw him sitting there.

Thy life is mine, thou meadow-lark;
Within thy golden breast I feel
My own heart beating, and I hark
And hear thy voice upon me steal,
Winning my own; and past repeal
I give myself to thee and mark
These few words here upon this maple's bark:

That "I am Thou and Thou art I;"
Cutting it deep that it may show
To future years; and, by and by,
When, as the tree shall lofty grow,
The woodman comes to lay it low,
This word shall stand before his eye,
That "I am Thou," writ clear, "and Thou art I."

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XVI

THIS is thy brother, this poor silver fish,
Close to the surface, dying in his dish;
Thy flesh, thy beating heart, thy very life;
All this, I say, art thou, against thy wish.

Thou mayst not turn away, thou shalt allow
The truth, nor shalt thou dare to question how:
There is but one great heart in nature beating,
And this is thy heart, this, I say, art thou.

In all thy power and all thy pettiness,
With this and that poor selfish purpose, this
And that high-climbing fancy, and a heart
Caught into heaven or cast in the abyss,

Thou art the same with all the little earth,
A little part; and sympathy of birth
Shall tell thee, and thine openness of soul,
What fear is death and what a life is worth.

SHORTER POEMS

XVII

FAR in the south the redwings hear and speed
To answer nature's far-heard northern cry ;
Swift from the fields they gather and take on
The burden of a journey ; young and old
Swing upward to the sun as if the need
Of earth and of her comfort were gone by.
And guided by the star of memory run
Upon the trembling air ; if, losing hold,
With weary wing one settle to the land ;
If, sideways glancing from the flight, one see
A fairer light than hope, or faltering
Another answer to the white command
Hurled upward from the gun : yet joyfully
The happy flight speeds onward with the spring.

XVIII

THOU little god within the brook
That dwellest, friend of man,
I oft have heard the simple prayer
Thou tellest unto Pan :

That he who comes with rod and line
And robs thy life to-day,
May yet by the great god be taught
To come some other way.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XIX

WHERE man has conquered nature dies;
We shift some slender-growing pine
From out her own familiar skies

Where-under forests fall and rise,
To pots and gardens, then repine
That where man conquers nature dies.

The atmosphere that round her lies
Bears not the light that used to shine
From out her own familiar skies,

She is a stranger. So our eyes
Run o'er the world and seek a sign!
If where man conquers nature dies

What is our earthly paradise?
Will nature there withhold the wine
That from her own familiar skies

She used to pour? Do we devise
A garden earth and say, in fine,
Where man has conquered nature dies
From out her own familiar skies?

SHORTER POEMS

XX

THE breath of slowly-moving spring
Stirs the light leaf, the doubtful wing,
And tempers each created thing.

The tumult of the summer's life
Surrounds the earth and, rich and rife,
Finds outlet in a world of strife.

The autumn season stills the plain,
Quiets the river, sifts the grain,
And looks to rest and sleep again.

In winter does great nature rest
Or die, dismissing every guest
And closing up the broad earth's breast.

XXI

“SOMETHING in the sense of morning
Lifts the heart up to the sun.”
In our youth we may be pagan,
God is many, and the One
Great Supreme will wait till evening
When our little day is done :
Something in the sense of morning
Lifts the heart up to the sun !

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XXII

THE road ran sloping through the trees
Below the dusty hill ;
The sun, swept inward by the breeze,
Lightened the running rill.

Maples and chestnuts stood along
And autumn, at the prime,
Strewed nuts and leafage that belong
To this September time.

One tree was green beside the way,
A small white pine, I thought ;
And there a broken branch and gray
Within a fork had caught.

It showed unlovely on the tree
As dark and dead it lay ;
“ And in my spleen I smiled ” to see
That symbol of decay.

But my companion did not show
Such sympathy as mine !
He mounted up the tree, to throw
Its burden from the pine.

SHORTER POEMS

I cried, "Why will you not believe
That nature's ways suffice
To nature's purposes and leave
Her to her own device?"

"She knows her purpose for the pine
And does not need the aid
Of wisdom such as yours and mine
In plans which she has made."

He cast it down and answered, "Why,
Ev'n as I am a man,
In doing this, believe me, I
Am part of nature's plan!"

I smiled again but not in joy,
In fear; for where it lay,
The branches covered, to destroy,
A purple aster spray!

My friend was pleased; not he divined
That though he was a man,
To be content we must be blind;
For *such* is nature's plan.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XXIII

I STOOD at the hedge as a hearse went by
And passed me along the way;
The sun broke in through a silver sky
And scattered a golden ray.

Should I offer a prayer for the passing dead,
For the hearts going burdened by;
With a human pity, a catholic dread
Of the tear, the sorrow, and sigh?

I too knew grief and the burdened heart,
Some knowledge of pain was mine;
Should I bow my head for another's smart,
Should I make this simple sign?

So I wondered and thought as the hearse went by
With its poor dead corpse within;
But I turned aside to the opening sky —
“Such a feeling may once have been,

“But now” — for the impulse was gone, you see,
And death was no longer new;
“Like a fallen leaf from an autumn tree
He is dead; what is else to do?”

SHORTER POEMS

And there on the path as I turned around,
By the side of a thorn-tree root
An earthworm lay, crushed into the ground
By the heel of a passing boot.

Well, death and death ; 't is an equal term.
For the worm and the man to-day ;
But I turned and buried the angle-worm
In a neighboring lump of clay.

XXIV

THE scream of the tern in the roar of the
waters

Will sound when the tumult of nature is o'er ;
When the garden of earth is a home for the
daughters
Of Eve, and when Pan is remembered no more.

White-winged, he appears ! Dark, erratic, uneven,
A figure on earth of the stars in the sky ;
Of high disarray and disorder in heaven,
Where the Galaxy strikes with dismay on the
eye !

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Where freak and caprice build a wild conflagration,
Where Chaos is king over torrents of stars ;
Who scatters the earth in a blind indignation,
And systems are sped in interminate wars.

Then the children of Pan in that day will come
singing,
In fierceness, of him who has set in the spheres
Dismay ; and along the salt sea-limits ringing,
The scream of the tern striking wild on their ears.

XXV

LIKE a dead leaf that rolls along the ground,
Driven by a wind that wanders round and round,
I see my heart, with edges cut and curled,
Like a dead leaf that 's driven without a sound.

Green faded into red, and red to brown ;
Life to decay, and death the latest crown !
So is my life, and lacks the heart of power
Here to lift up the god that 's fallen down.

Alas ! why, in the days of mighty Jah,
Did I pull down thy pillars, Asherah ?
Baäl, where art thou ? Egypt, even thou
Hadst faith for me beneath the wings of Ptah !

SHORTER POEMS

XXVI

ADAM arose at the word of God,
Up-borne on the bosom of all the earth ;
Brother of trees and the black, prone sod ;
The same in death and the same in birth.

Is it divine, the mystery ?
Is the whisper true of the hidden word
That sounds for some in hill and sea,
In the lapse of life when the deeps are heard ?

The sunlight lifts in the soul of man
The white-light torch of another dawn ;
And love will finger a mystic span,
When the chords are drawn.

XXVII

IN long, slow silences of soul
Beneath the sunset on the sea
I think I hear the numbers roll
That tell my conquest over thee ;

When thou art gentle and serene,
Thyself, forgotten all thy pride ;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

And I, myself as I have been,
A hero with his sword untried,

Able for mastery ; and the game
Is offered and the action up ;
And to my purpose true I claim
A hot draught from the stirrup-cup,

Then entertain thee. All my soul
Awakes upon the sunset sea
When high and clear the numbers roll
That tell my conquest over thee.

XXVIII

IF ever I have thought or said
In all the seasons of the past
One word at which thy heart has bled
Believe me, it will be the last.

The tides of life are deep and wide,
The currents swift to bear apart
E'en kindred ships ; but from thy side
I pray my sail may never start.

If, in the turning day and night
Of this our earth, our little year,

SHORTER POEMS

Thou shalt have lost me from thy sight
Across the checkered spaces drear,

Thy words are uttered ; and the mind
Accustomed, cannot all forget ;
While written in my heart I find
An impulse that is deeper yet.

We love but never know the things,
To value them, that nearest stand.
The heart that travels seaward brings
The dearest treasure home to land.

To M. J. S.

LONGER POEMS

I – VII



I

A NEW ENGLAND MOUNTAIN

WESTMORELAND and the hills of Cum-
berland,

Though Alps may overpeer them, have a name
Unperishing while the earth still bears in man
The blossom of a high-aspiring mind ;
For Wordsworth loved them. And the sacred
poet

Helvetia lacks not, nor old-age Japan,
A poet whose song above the fields of tea,
Above the temples to the figured god
Ancient in beauty set against the ascent,
Rises supreme to where above them all
Uplifts a hollow summit white with snow
Pale Fuji-san, and there in music builds
A temple sheer in beauty to the sky !
No outland peaks I know ; but were I born
Among the lakes, or in the fields of Kai
No other were the song's essential heart
Upon the mountains that I then should sing ;
For once I saw a summit not so bright
As these are fabled, mounting to the sky
In scar and ice-cliff loftily supreme,
But such a mountain as New England knows ;
And never since in moments when the press

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Of life has lifted has the mountain's touch —
Joy, merely joy and beauty, that is all,
And passionate love and depth and mystery —
Left me ! and thus I sing a native song,
Content to be a brother to Japan,
Cousin to Switzerland, believing true
That ere he wanders by Castalian springs
The poet first must drink the wells of home.

II

NEAR THE WHITE LEDGE, SANDWICH, N. H.

I FOLLOWED up a little burn,
Led onward by the smell of fern ;
And standing at the opening day
Where yellow blossoms line the way
I catch, blown faintly on the air,
The whispered perfume of the rare,
Pale *morning*-primrose, wet and fair !
The bobolink stands on the grass
Now ere the deep July shall pass
And greets me from the bennets tall ;
I hear a distant thrush's call
Rise full and deep, then silent fall.

LONGER POEMS

Spirit of Wordsworth, with me still
Upon the plain, upon the hill,
I find my purpose wholly bent
To be to-day thine instrument ;
Led upward to the thought of thee
By all the spreading world I see.
The broad lake country at my feet
Bids Asquam with Wynander greet,
Rydal with Ossipee ; and shows
The Bearcamp water where it flows
Another Rotha, stream and break,
From covert pond to glittering lake ;
While Grasmere lies serene and still
By yonder tarn beneath Red Hill.
Thy mountains, Wordsworth, too, are by
And paint their shadows on the sky.
Chocorua stands, but not alone,
For out across the scene is thrown
The memory of Helvellyn ; hid
Within thy folds, Tripyramid,
Are thoughts of Kirkstone, Fairfield, all
That heard Joanna's laughing call !
Whiteface is vanished in the shade
By Scawfell and Blencathra made ;
While Sandwich Mountain at the west,
In Glaramara's shadow dressed,
Leads the high path toward Campton ways

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Across a steeper Dunmail Raise !
Lake, hill, and mountain, all are bright
With the first gift of morning light ;
The sun is on them and the dew,
Shining far down and glittering through
The wide, white fields of mountain air
High o'er the valleys everywhere.
And Wordsworth, in the auxiliar flame
That trembles on them from thy name
They bear in all their company
Aloft, the living thought of thee.

The Quaker poet sang his song
And loved the world these scenes among ;
A sober man, a song, I think
Not like the wanton bobolink !
It was an utterance sweet like those
Light raptures of the song-sparrows ;
It ne'er attained the impetuous rush
And music of the full-voiced thrush ;
Whose song, O Wordsworth, like to thine
In joy long-thought and measured fine,
Is priestly in the praise of Pan Divine.

LONGER POEMS

III

“I LEFT THE CITY”

I LEFT the city to the north and walked
Against a southwest wind ; the hurtling rain
Showered the empty streets in noisy gusts,
Swept little footsteps down across the walls,
And on the wind came tossing through the trees.
The gusty city was not long to leave,
And underneath the open heaven I found
Breath and a beating wind, a hurrying sky
Of gray cloud under white, a world of rain,
And one long roadway southward under it,
A causey on the marsh, where on the left
A broad reach of the tide lay full, with salt
Red grasses bounded. Swinging to the west
The long, dark wind came streaming, while the rain
Sloped with the wind and swept into my face ;
And I rejoiced, exulted in my heart,
Taking a grim delight as I suppressed
Each motion that betrayed me to the rain,
And drew my mantle closer. Rank on rank
The rain came on ; the landscape, wetted o'er,
Lay passive, bay and bogland, to the sky ;
The wind beat hard, and I through a long hour
Had stood rejoicing in the unwonted storm,

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

When two small figures hurrying through the rain
Came down the pathway from the town ; they
 laughed,

Two rascal boys set free from school and mother,
And laid small schemes for catching smaller fish,
Clambered across the roadway fence and followed
Through the salt grasses to the reedy shore ;

I saw them standing, careful of their lines
And peering o'er the bankside, plotting deep
With one desire in earnest in their minds
And filling them ; while I, the idler there,
Leaned on the rail to watch them and the bay,
Gave up the hope I harbored of the west
And sunset, for the hour was drawing near,
Content to take my pleasure in the rain.

The sky had darkened in the hour and drew
A cloak of gray cloud closer to the earth ;
Sudden as half aware I watched the scene
A sense of saffron in the western sky
Grew over me ; the heavens were lifted high
And broke before my eyes ; along the west
Great masses of the storm swept to the north,
Went swarming eastward in the southern sky ;
The evening earth grew black beneath the light
That broke through western clouds, that caught
 the rain

In brightness as it lay in shining pools,

LONGER POEMS

And sprang from wet walls and from dripping roofs.
There midst the white light and the golden edges
Of happy clouds just opening to the earth,
Bluer than painted blue was ever painted,
I saw the sky and prayed — prayed ? prayed to
whom ?

God, God ! I cried, but what I meant I knew not.
This was the perfect beauty, this was joy
Supreme, redundant ; ah ! no longer men
Seek heaven in Beatrice ; this was heaven displayed
To the broad, fertile earth and yet I prayed not.
'T was like a gray thought broken by the wind
Of promise and the sun's fulfilment ; scattered
To north and south, with routed columns flying,
Majestic rain in grand procession moved
Across the saffron fading western sky,
Cloud upon massive cloud-shape trailing low
Over the sunset earth ; while in my eyes
I caught the cool, white, crystal light of heaven
That glistens after rain, and that one grace
Supreme that God has granted pagan man,
The bright blue sky.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

IV

THE SONG-SPARROW

AT rest upon some quiet limb
And singing to his pretty "marrow,"
Sweet-breasted friend of child and man,
I love the bright eyes and the tan,
Gray-mottled coat that suits the trim
And winsome singing-sparrow.

He seeks no dear and lofty ground ;
His home is every ridge and furrow ;
In the low alder bushes he 's
At home, and in the wayside trees ;
Wherever man lives I have found
The nest of the song-sparrow,

Except among the chimney-tops
A-smoking where the streets are narrow ;
Where man has banished living green
And scarce a blade of grass is seen
He rarely comes, he never stops,
The little rustic sparrow.

Where twigs are small and branches low
And scarce the name of woods can borrow,

LONGER POEMS

He flits and sings the whole day long
And "Rivers run," is still his song,
"And flowers blossom, breezes blow,
And all for the song-sparrow!"

I meet him in the tufted field
Among the clover-tops and yarrow;
I hear him by the quiet brook,
And always with the open look
Of one who would not be concealed;
And then I meet the sparrow

When golden lights at evening run
Among the trees the copses thorough;
And there I catch his joyous song,
Stealing the moments that belong
To songsters of the setting sun
And not to the song-sparrow.

When touches of the coming night
Set free the bands of hidden sorrow
The night-bird sounds his ringing note,
And from his melancholy throat
The hermit pours a sad delight,
And no one hears the sparrow.

His song is tuned for his to-day,
With hope and promise for the morrow;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

More lofty notes are upward sent,
But none more simple and content,
None cheerfuller in work and play
Than that of the song-sparrow.

V

IN CHERRY LANE

A LITTLE maiden, in her hand
A pitcher, on her head a band
Of yellow cloth ; her neck was bare,
The kerchief fluttered in the air ;
The loose-stuff gown all straitly hung
And as she went about her clung ;
Her bosom showed beneath the dress
Young and unconscious, and a tress
Now here, now there, crept out beneath
The band, as from the opening sheath
The tasselled spring ; a slender maid,
She walked in childhood unafraid.

That such a slip of womanhood
Should blossom in a lane so rude,
That one in that low, sodden place
Should smile with such a winning grace

LONGER POEMS

A marvel is unto the last !
I seemed to see, even as she passed
The summer following on the spring ;
Hot, fetid days that ever bring
The noisome vapors up about
The meadow blossom in a rout ;
Till in the passing of the days
The stem was bent, the shining face
Stooped down and met the marshy soil
And soon was gone. But in my heart
Even at the fancy I recoil ;
I will not give her such a part.
Her eye was bright, her step was free,
And as I looked I seemed to see
The quick blood flow, the softer skin
Below the throat, beneath the chin,
The quick, young beating of the heart,
And on her face the blushes start !
Even as she came so let her go,
Whither or whence I cannot know.
I only know if in that lane
I ever chance to pass again,
The memory of that maiden fair
Will lend a fragrance to the air
And make the place, not over sweet,
Not wholly evil to my feet.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

VI

WOODSTOCK

THIS, Woodstock, is my gift; and if I give
So much as this of all thou gavest me,
Call me not selfish if I have forgot
Thy daily life.

THE STREAMS

OFT have my footsteps in the past been turned,
Woodstock, to seek in solitude the life
That flows within thy brotherhood of streams;
In Moosilauke the slender, in the blue
Pemigewasset, and the silver East.
Now once again — and in what other scenes! —
Thy voices come to me, thy life, across
The silver indistinctness of a year;
And first, O Moosilauke, I turn to thee,
Born of the mighty mountain and its caves
Dark, and its forests and its long ravines.
A multitude of slender waters run
From off the sloping hills, from beds of moss
Beneath a hundred oaks, from little stones
Tumbled along before thy April strength,

LONGER POEMS

Now lying quiet, making thee a bed ;
From sandy sources in the tufted fields
Where cattle browse, and from a thousand springs
Where I was never led thy waters come,
Thy blue and silver slender stream. The sky
Bends over thee more closely, and there falls
A richer gift of azure through the trees
Upon thy waters, making thee a brook
Of blue and silver, Moosilauke ; and thou,
Fulfilled of beauty in thyself and round
Encompassed all about with loveliness,
Art richer than thy brothers in the gift
Of quietness and tender solitude ;
Friend of the green upon thy banks, thou 'rt loved
More dearly by the white and purple flowers,
More dearly loved if loving be the act
Of neighborhood and presence ; and as I
Do love the neighborhood of green and blue,
The forest and the sky ; the silver love
That glistens in the stream, and that low light
That passes from the faces of the flowers ;
So by this promise and confession I
Do love thee, Moosilauke.

And thee I love,
Pure in thy beauty, perfect in thy strength,
Pemigewasset, lying in thy source
Beneath the brow of the great Profile ! Far

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Above thee is the stern, sad Mountain King,
Him with the mighty message that no man
Can wholly hear : the sternness and the sadness
Of nature conscious of herself, or man
Conscious of nature, ignorant of God.
This is the burden of that noble brow ;
And thou to me didst give along thy way
Suggestions of this message till below,
Surrounded by the world, thou dost forget
Thy birth and I with thee forgot. One day
I wandered from thy course beside a run
Of darker waters ; turning from the track
Of wheels and from the multitude of men
Along thy fertile way, to seek thy stream,
Thou dark-veined Bogan, tributary brook.
Thy waters run and bear a deeper song
Soft on the moss, and in my heart I love
The memory of that hour wherein I stayed
My life a little while with thee ; my heart
Was opened to thee in a deep unrest,
And to the motion of thy currents all
My thoughts ran freely ; 't was a joy to hear,
'T was rest and satisfaction to behold
Thy voice and colors and thy forms ; I took
A comfort in thy presence, tuned to hear
A voice in thee repeated from my own
And yet not wholly mine ; but more, to live

LONGER POEMS

And run harmonious with my hand in thine,
And in the gentle beating of thy life
Find my own poise and balance ; wrapt about
As in a mist of music and led on
To live and feel as prodigal as thou,
Careless of all degrees.

And now with strength and joy I turn to thee
Thundering in thy caverns, noble East,
Born of the midmost of the mountains, child
More truly than the Saco of the heart
And spirit of the hills. The powers prevail
Through all the mountains that shall give thee life ;
Thy birth is now upon a thousand peaks
And has been and shall be ; thou art a giant,
Impatient of the earth that holds thee, wild !
And thus thy voice is stranger to me, thus
It sounds a note I cannot always hear,
Not in all moods ; but sometimes, low at first,
Above the unsensed tumult of the world
I hear the rushing of thy waters, catch
The silver flash of sunlight from thy rocks,
Then in my heart feel thy great spirit moving.
Thou art the friend, not of the earth — the rocks
Surround thee and control thy dreadful course —
But of the mountain winds ; the winds pass o'er thee
And catch thy motion and thy eager voice ;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Thus tempered they pass onward and below
They whisper to the listening ear of man.
Or in thy solitudes perchance he hears
A choral voice, thy music and the wind,
Joined always, breathing to the same intent,
A brother voice, an echo of his own.
There if he listen, down below the sound
He hears the voice articulate of life
Made manifest his own; he hears *his* voice
Dim-speaking to him through the gulf of change;
Another form, a myriad others, but
Ever his own beseeching to be heard
In sympathy. Wise in my purpose I,
Nor I alone give, noble East, to thee
My hand; for thou art brother to the wind,
And savage as thou art, child of the peaks,
Clad white in rocks and thine own silver form,
Thou dost not find thy rest upon the earth
But goest dissatisfied unto the sea
Where thou again art wild.

To J. T. S.

LONGER POEMS

THE HEDGEROW

THE sun is up, Great God, the sun is up,
High o'er the eastern hill among white clouds
Insufferable! I thank Thee for the call.
Deep in the Woodstock meadows on a morn
Pleasant it is to wander ere the sun
Has burned the dewdrops off the bending grass;
When each small area seems a world complete,
When every forest stem beneath the sun
Shoots out a light, and every meadow span
Is dowered with moving radiance; and the hills!
I had not known their power till I had seen,
Limned by the early morn, their mystic heads
White in the eastern circuit. From the town
The path led out across the dew-wet lands,
Crossed the cold river in the river-mist,
And turned aside before the columned elms,
Heavy with morning light; three things remain
In joy, of all the pleasant things I saw
Along this early path: the glowing elms,
Far off, the line of hills, and suddenly
(That rose abrupt and claimed its character)
A straight and tangled row of heavy green,
A hedge, till then unguessed, where loftier trees
Stood up amid a world of clustering things,
Brambles and slender vines and, stiffly held,

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

The heads of little, sturdy, hopeful trees.
Along one maple branch some colder wisp
Of passing wind had struck an early blow
And pressed the green life back ; the kindlier airs
Had after gathered round and now caressed
The broken hope into a golden death.
This was a passing fancy, but the elms
Are living elms and must forever live,
Rich in the willing burden of that morn ;
I never see beneath the golden mist
Of peaceful afternoon, or in the time
Of open daylight such an upland slope
Without the gentle coming of this one,
This morning picture and the further thought
Of all the hidden chambers whence are drawn
The veils, lights, shadows, colors of the world
That spread across the poorest piece of ground
To form and to transform ; then at the last
I saw the tangled hedgerow by the wall,
My mind woke to a fancy and at once
I found it wandering over English fields
And lodging with the primrose and the lark ;
For here there was a hedge ! The pioneer
Had built his roadside wall of labored stone,
And through his fields had led this simple line
Rough-set of rounded rock, to part his herd
Of cattle and his flock (perhaps) of sheep,

LONGER POEMS

What time they browsed in Woodstock. Early
grass

Had pushed a carpet in among the stones
And here the scythe had stopped; chance-drifted
dust,

Holding the promise and the hope of life,
Seeds, the small looms of nature's garment, here
Found an untroubled resting-place and ran
Through all their changes. Years passed by and
here

The squirrel found a harbor and a home;
For overhead the angled beechnut hung,
And hazels stood at hand. Here in the spring
The gold of summer's sunrise — dandelions —
And daisies, starry oxeyes, clustered near;
The earlier violets were not absent nor
In later days the modest, showy bell,
Blue, slender-hanging. So the summers passed,
Rising and falling; as his homestead grew
The farmer mowed more widely, nor his flocks
Demanded less his care in fold and field
To bound; and so as ever each day more
He saw the need for labor, this one wall,
Now old and overgrown, he eyed with pleasure;
The stones might fall away, the flooding rains
That drove the stream up on the meadow-lands
Might roll and still displace them, and the vines,

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

The wild grape and the bramble, force their way
Disintegrating, still no care was his ;
For over all the green was gathered close
And densely massed, so that no glimpse beyond
Greeted the searching eye ; and here I found
The hedgerow standing as the sun had shaped it,
Richly confused and prodigal and wild,
And yet a straight, well-guided hedge and serving
Its master better than he served himself,
Adding to service beauty and a soul.

SOLITUDE

IKNOW a little patch of mountain ground
Low-settled by itself ; and Moosilauke
Stands boldly in the west but never sees
Its little group of buildings and the elm
Close by the door. And farther in the north,
Bearing his sun-scarred summit proudly forth,
Stands noble Lafayette ; he looks abroad
Across the sunny hamlet where the meadows
Shine with a softer green, yet scarcely knows
This low gray dwelling and beside the door
Its ancient elm-tree ; yet do Lafayette
And Moosilauke the mountain and the deep,
Aspiring hills feel through their silent hearts

LONGER POEMS

The birth and progress, Woodstock, of thy streams,
Born of the mossy mountains and the rocks
And running through the hills ; and they in turn
Do visit and confirm the house in joy.
Gray with the touch of nature, friend familiar
Of forests and their mosses, with its roofs
Long-sloping to the west, I see it stand,
With gables not uncopied from the hills,
The mountain house, the home of quietness.
The village knew it not ; beyond the hill
It was itself a hamlet ; here there stood
Its tributary fields and pastures, here
A crystal source of water and a world
Of timber, and its flocks were on the hills.
There lay the little graveyard in the pines,
And these with larches and small maples made
A decent graveyard shadow ; and I see
One queer, untutored apple that has placed
His foot beyond the pale, dropping his fruit
On the most ancient grave ; all round about
Are golden meadows quiet in the sun,
With ombrel elm-trees dotting out the green.

This is the gate to Solitude ; one day
I crossed the yard to where an old man sat
And questioned him, although I knew him not,
Brought here among the sources of the hills

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Close to the thought of small simplicity.
I asked him, "Where is Solitude?" He rose,
And pointing with his cane across the ridge
Described a course that drew my heart in joy;
"Beyond the sheepfold follow the small lane
Across the first low ridge; the cattle there
Are mine and mine the pasture to the wood;
The lane will enter through the trees and lead
A mile or more over and up the slope,
There where you see the pines; let down the bars
At the upper end and that is Solitude."
I never started out on any course
With half the joy I felt for Solitude!
Rocks in the pasture lay, oases bare
In deserts of green grass! I moved among
The beasts and stood beside them where they drank
The stony pasture stream, where little grass
Crept thickly down the bank beside the shallows.
I wet my lips; 't is like a sacrament
To touch wild water where the cattle drink;
And more, I guessed it came from Solitude.
Then at the entrance of the trees I stood,
Ground the hard earth beneath my foot, and sent
A proud glance northward; he who thus can stand
On Moosilauke and look on Lafayette
Is master of the western hills; below,
Beyond the trees and pasture lay the valley

LONGER POEMS

Voiceless and crowded by the mountains round
In multitude so great I turned and fled
Up the long, turning footway of the lane.
Ah, silence in the forest ! I have learned
More from the hush of forests than from speech
Of many teachers, more of joy at least,
And that quick sympathy where joy has birth ;
A thousand times called outward from myself
By life at every point, ten thousand things
Speaking at once in tones so sharp and sweet
Their voice was pain, but pain as life is pain
Beneath the over-chorus of the sky ;
In silence finding joy to know myself
Deep in the heart of nature and the world.
As one advances up the slow ascent
Along the pathway in the woods the trees
Change aspect, nor alone in this but change
In stature and in power till Solitude
Seems cut out of the ancient forest. Here
Was Solitude ! where man had lived of old,
Loved, serving God, and built himself a home.
Man smooths an acre on the rolling earth,
Turns up the mould and reaps the gifts of God ;
Plucks down the apple from the tree, the tree
From empire in the forest, builds a home ;
Turns for a bout among his brothers, wins
A sister to his wife and gets an heir ;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

And then as here in Solitude departs
And leaves small mark behind. The place is rare
In this high epic of the human life.
Where wildness has been wilderness shall be,
But give God time ; and life is but a span,
Nine inches, while before it and behind
Stretches the garden of the cosmic gods ;
For after London, England shall be wild
And none can thaw the iceberg at the pole.
In Solitude one sees the winding trace
Of what has been a road, a block of stone
Footworn, that lies along the dim pathway
Before one old foundation ; and the rest
Is freaks of grass among the rising growth
Of birch and maple that another year
Shall see almost a forest.

VII

PUTATIS LUCUM LIGNA

YE seem intent to stand alone
Monarchs, ye men, of stock and stone ;
The forest dead and everywhere
Untenanted the fields of air.
To view a wood unwilling, ye

LONGER POEMS

Who for the timber hate the tree !
Will ye cast nature from her throne
And waste the earth you call your own ?
Descending from the Lincoln hills
I came where join the Woodstock rills ;
Across the east a smoky veil
Lets not, or day or night, to trail
Words dire in meaning, seen before
By Dante on the infernal door !
For pant of engines on the air
Shatters the mountain silence where
Five-throated, bound with iron bands,
The havoc of the forest stands !

Where man has conquered nature dies
From out her own familiar skies,
 And nature loves her child ;
'T is nature loves the running brooks,
Not man but nature guards the nooks
 From which they are beguiled.
Infinite labor gives them birth,
The rocks, the deeps below the earth,
And dusky shadows bring them forth
 As weak as they are wild.
The earth will, all in little room
Become a garden, then a tomb ;
 Then keep it while ye may

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

A little wild, where we may see
The unthreatened glory of a tree,
 And feel the fountain's spray.
Reserve one spot where we may find
An untamed accent in the wind;
And beds of moss unbroken, where
To mark the footprint of the bear;
One stream of water mountain-pure
Wherein the wild trout may endure
And the wild deer may drink and bathe secure !

SONNETS

I - XVI



I

THE flood of life that turned away
In search of rarer things, the rose,
The fragile flower that bursting blows,
And as it blows turns to decay,
Once more seeks rest along the way
Of earlier days and finds repose
In love of each green thing that grows,
A bunch of grass, an alder spray.
You common things I hold you dear
And beg the comfort you can give;
The faith that bears you through the year,
The courage both to die and live;
Believing that I too shall hear
The mountains fall, and shall not grieve.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

II

TEN thousand fancies flitting through the mind,
An impulse here, a half-created thought
Are, in the stress of fancied duty, taught
To bow and pass and leave no trace behind.
Or carelessness, destructive as the wind,
More prodigal than nature, valuing not
The store of life that pain and joy have wrought
Laughs and forgets, blind leader of the blind !
We are but open caskets whence are fled
The choicest gifts God-given ; while we retain
Indifference with a blustering hardihead,
And querulousness before a righteous pain ;
Pale pietism, when virtue's self is dead,
With smug conceit impregnable and vain.

SONNETS

III

“**M**ERCY! Justice! Ah, no! Heaven’s gate!
Heaven’s gate!”

Panic above the crash of trampling horse
And rush of wings upright against the course,
A cry of gods confounded under fate!
In tumult deep and inarticulate
The angelic press burst outward, of the Source
Of bulk Omnipotence compelled by force —
Save Lucifer, omnipotent in hate.
Bright as the dying day, with one black cloud
Up-marshalled from the south and crossing o’er
The glory and blotting out the evening star,
So for a space he stood; then silent bowed,
And from the battlements outspringing far
Deep into darkness all his anguish bore.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

IV

I LOVE the hills but she the open shore,
The shore because it lies along the sea.
I would be lofty, solitary, free,
Selfish at times ; at times, hearing the roar
Of the ocean where beneath the bending oar
It does the planet service, I would be
As rich in blessing, yea, as rich as she
Is rich in blessing ; I could not be more.
I walk apart, my heart is in the sky,
Yet ever yearning downward to the land ;
She walks where all the world is crowding by
And holds a little child in either hand ;
I bless her service with a troubled cry
Of one who would but cannot understand.

SONNETS

V

I CANNOT face the utterance of a prayer
In innocence ; I know not by what gate
Egress it finds beyond the fields of air ;
In what vain corridor my words may wait.
A mystic once, I did communicate
With my own self and thought with God to share
My hope and aspiration ; but of late
My words, like Noah's dove, returning bare,
I feel the confines of my spirit's heaven.
Against the limits of myself in vain
They strike and bruise their wings and downward
fall.

Then to myself, Peace ! do I cry, and call
That sufferance peace which yet is perfect pain :
In courage, Peace ! when there is no peace given.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

VI

TO catch at that which never can be caught,
To yearn for what thou never shalt attain
(Nature's own motions moving in the brain)
This is thy life and thou by her art taught.
This is her gift; to thee if welcome not
With all its store of passion and of pain,
Thou hast the power to give it back again
And break the bow before thou triest the shot.
Nay rather let me live to fight the fight
And die the death, when driven against the wall,
That many a man has fairly fought and died.
Then shall I keep the spark she gave me bright
(Gigantic mirth, that gave it to deride!)
And cast it at the heavens even as I fall.

SONNETS

VII

A MONTH ago the cloud alone was fair.
None watched the leafless tree-tops, thin and
dry,
Hold up their slender fans against the sky
Save here a poet and a dreamer there.
But now the sun through the soft, golden air
Requires an incense from the flowers that lie
Within a thousand vales ; and low and high
The broad earth doth a pale green mantle wear.
Now voices are where all was still before ;
By each green leaf there trembles a brown wing ;
A thousand small lives wake beside my door
And each one turns to labor and to sing.
At last man feels the tumult of the spring
And looks upon the universe once more.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

VIII

A THOUSAND flowerets of a thousand hues
Born of the sunset and the early dawn,
Burn in the darker forest and suffuse
An unimagined brightness o'er the lawn.
These are the days I give my heart in pawn
To thee, O nature, and the world refuse ;
These are the days I feel my footsteps drawn
To seek the wayward motions of the muse !
I have not long enough on earth to stay
To lose the joy of one bright summer day ;
One quiet day of peace, ah many a one !
Full of the song of birds and tremulous
With sunshine ; let the world seek after us :
The muse and I are wandering with the sun.

SONNETS

IX

I STOOD long time and listened to the wind
That tossed the fallen foliage o'er and o'er;
Long time I stood; then turned within to bind
An evergreen upon the open door.
When winter comes to sweep across the floor
And freeze the panes perforce the huswife mind
Shuts-to the autumnal door and there reclined
Battens on books till summer comes once more.
I cannot stop her; turning to the shelves
Her idleness she feeds on other men;
Takes what she finds, complaining not and delves
In mines deep-sunken with the golden pen;
Then weary grows and longs to see again
The spirits of the sky, the woodland elves.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

X

MOOSILAUKE IN DECEMBER

THE wet, brown leaves of winter on the ground
Unkempt they looked or evil, one by one
Called back to vision by a careless sun ;
He should by this have reached his southern bound
Leaving December earth all straitly gowned
In decent white ; but here we trod upon
Her bosom black, uncovered and undone,
And shrank from many a wet and naked wound.
The Parthian sun his arrows to the head
Drew, and within the field a little rill
Beneath an edge of morning ice awoke ;
A line down through the mat-brown grass it led
White, threaded with the blue the heavens spill,
And tinkled coldly past a frozen oak.

SONNETS

Light veils of snow the west wind bore along,
White shadows, drifted through the upper air
Above the valley ; they were very fair
And passed in music like a summer song.
I stood upon a mountain ; here the strong
Wild-Ammonoosuc rolled in forests bare,
A tumult in his hollow pathway ; there
Whispered through Wildwood with an icy tongue.
The sunlight shone on Kinsman through the cloud
And turned the little falling snow to gold
Which never reached the earth, but it went back
Into the chambers of the air ; the loud,
White shepherd west wind drove into the fold
And forests waving showed his vanished track.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

Standing above the Tunnel gorge, the brook
Unseen, unheard below I knew laid out
And trimmed its tenements for April's trout,
Rested and ran from hidden nook to nook.
The wintry forests in the wind had shook
December from their branches; round about,
The sun had aided in the season's rout
To Moosilauke; and when to him I look,
White snow and winter build in me a sense,
Structured on beauty awful and serene,
Of majesty, a pressing sense of fear.
I never saw a vision more intense
In awfulness than that tremendous scene —
Black Moosilauke, uprising dark and near!

SONNETS

So very near ! Far down, the Tunnel run
Crept out beneath the mountain's heavy base ;
Buttress and bastion mounting I could trace
In upright courses to the supreme One,
High, distant dome where-over bits of sun
Ran with the rolling clouds a windy race.
But all beneath was blackness, and my face
A breath as of the mountain fell upon.
A whisper from the mountain came across,
So dark, so strong ! a breath in blackness drawn,
Long drawn and deep, so near we were and high !
And then it seemed a simple child might toss
Against the opposèd wall a pebble-stone,
Deep in the Tunnel gorge to roll and lie.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XI

THE poet stoops and plucks a little flower
To tell his greatness in a simple song ;
He does not need through seasons to prolong
A mighty work to manifest his power ;
Which still is simple, still the common dower
If unexpressed, of many in the throng
Unconscious who, with poetry along,
In life's sojourn spend many a happy hour.
So Burns delights us with a lowly lay,
The warm expression of a simple joy ;
So Wordsworth, moving through each quiet day,
Forgets not the quick impulse of the boy ;
And midst thy passion, Shelley, to destroy,
Thou'st found the truth along the lyric way.

SONNETS

XII

I HATE the vast array of "modern" things,
Gilt and pale purple, yellow, pink, and white;
Dull imitations and a thousand light
And weightless books of verse and copyings.
There are so many! Every season brings
A thousand fashions new and with delight
Proclaims them beautiful; till I take flight
And turn me to the masters and the kings.
And yet they will not let the masters be;
I find my Walton in a showy dress;
Find all the bright, old-age simplicity
Bedecked and botched; the years of good Queen
 Bess
Are made the duli philistine's property;
And Burns is "popularly" sent to press.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XIII

HIGH on a sunward-mounting precipice
Edged with a cloud that all before me ran,
I backward gazed and pictured, span by span,
How I had mounted upward from the abyss;
By what a confused pathway come to this,
The end of earth; and saw the future's plan
Grow, "minimize the universe to man,"
And build a daring, nobler edifice.
Ah, struggle to assume this new control
And seek thy higher reaches, O my soul!
Thou'rt sure of this, thy feet are on the earth;
Forget it, it remains; but let thine eyes
Lead on thy heart, and find beyond the skies
At least the promise of an upward birth.

SONNETS

XIV

HONEY of woodland wild and of the hill,
The juices of the maple and the cane
And all the fulness of the fallen grain ;
The pauses in the running of the rill,
Silence of distant meadows, voices far
Of unseen swallows in the upper air ;
The beauty of the bending bough ; the rare,
Soft rose, the sunbeam and the melting star —
What are they all but shadows in the night
To thee, where beauty burns a perfect light !
I see thee standing gracefuller than grass,
Naked, with one foot in the lingering stream,
The sun upon thee, perfect ! or alas,
Is it not thee, my dryad, but a dream !

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

XV

THE warm, moist kiss of April on the grass ;
The stooping sun, the wet and fragrant plain ;
The voice of life, low-whispered as I pass ;
The vision of the summer through the rain ;
A thousand thoughts borne outward from the mind
Laughing at nature, caught and held again
Close to the stirring heart, till like the grain
In autumn they are scattered by the wind !
And some may range along the open sky,
And some may fall and live and some may die.
I care not now whether the wanton air
Rid me of flying chaff or sift the seed
Of future promise ; or if this, indeed,
My present fancy lead me anywhere !

SONNETS

XVI

ILAI^D upon a rock beside the sea
A spray of eglantine where all about
The water rushed in torrents in and out
Among the wet, black rocks tempestuously.
To eastward high, a little promont'ry
Up-bore the billows on his iron breast;
And thence they rolled beyond him to the west
Surging about my eglantine and me.
And of the mightiest waves their spray that cast
White and imperious far into the air,
Not one but passed the sweet-briar safely by.
Till, midst the churning foam and surges there
That reached but could not clutch it, rising high
The tide itself did take it at the last.

FRAGMENTS

I - V



I

IN the low-lying April afternoon
The earth was hushed within a mellow mist
Across the new brown meadows; the white sun
Was gathered in a knot of clouds and gave
No thought of an infinity beyond.
Each blade of grass was conscious of its shadow;
The sounds of birds and waters and the air
Were stilled within the silence where I sat
Beside, and as I sat I felt the least
Of nature's children that around me played,
And all was like a dream. I gathered up
A handful of the grass and then forgot it;
I felt a gentle rising of the wind
And heard a sparrow whisper close at hand,
With other little life beside me; but
The distance faded and the nearness grew
Confused to a fancy in the gray,
The desolate gray shadow of the earth,
Unreal and dimly dying from my thought
Till all was nothing save the sun and me.

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

II

WESTWARD I walked; the sun was low;
the plain,

Seeming to rise before me, with the earth
Revolving, rolling backward to the east,
Shut out the dropping sun. I hastened on,
But still the day grew darker as the west
Drew in its last, white, fading fan of light,
And all the world was cold; and when the land
Ceased to reflect the sky, and heavy lay,
And dully, by itself, I came where spread
A darkling mirror, whitened half, and blue,
Still cherishing a faint thought of the sky.
The hour was calm, forgetful of the day,
Where toward the noon the pattering rain did
beat

The fragrant earth; a soft green mist arose
And lay across the opening fields; and then,
Sweeping the huddled air around the world
The silver storm scowled black; o'er all the sky
It tore itself in fury and ran low
Across the shuddering earth; it seized the trees,
It seized the mountains in its gloomy hands
And shook them; while the terror stricken streams
Leaped madly on to aid the warring sea.
Then in the thronging blackness of the storm

FRAGMENTS

I had rejoiced, as now I smiled to see
The fair, white, gentle surface of the lake
And feel the air fall softly ; at my feet
The waters rose like coming thoughts that fall
Forgotten, and my mind rose till it ran
As smoothly as the yet unbroken wave.

III

THE wild-eyed, savage gull, with bow'd wing,
tips
The white, flat surface of the misty sea ;
Or, stooping in the wind-trod, hollow wave,
Reels upward straight, hangs quivering, his whole
self
Intent, and breaks the surface like a bolt !
This spirit of the mystery of the sea
Sweeps by in silence on the noisy scud,
Or bursts across the borders of the storm,
A flash of horrid white ; with beating wing
Struggles in futile, royal wrath against
The armed battalions of a mighty wind,
And beaten, leaps aloft upon the storm
To ride in fury down the conquering gale.
Away, thou symbol of my own gray thoughts !
Whenever from the heaven of weary hopes

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

The clouds run low in the palely flowing sky ;
Whenever from the world of the unachieved
The mists mount up to meet the drooping cloud,
And I between them fail, 't is thou I see,
Thou dreadful emblem of my darker life !
Thou art no child of sunlight, for indeed,
Whether beneath some purple summer eve
Thou weariest thy way into the west,
Or in the winter on the frozen bay
Standest erect, a white, mad, ravened king,
Life-banished by the ice, thou art the same,
Grim, busy with thyself, hard, gloomy, wild.

IV

AT sunset in the college close the light
Falls like a benediction softly down ;
Here is a moving stillness in the air,
Quiet, as though the now deserted east
Had laid its empty hand upon the lawns
And hushed the world ; from out the glowing west
The sunlight settles on each tender leaf,
And entering in the gentle, empty cells
Calls through the hollow tubes ; down to the earth
Trembles the peaceful summons ; and the grass
Drinks in the sunset light, except where lie

FRAGMENTS

Dark trceries of black upon the green,
Left mourning for the sun the while the tree
Laughs with its selfish seizure of the light !
This is the life of peace ; but on the sky
The city in the distance casts a light
Brilliant and false, electric, publishing
Confusion and false day, nature betrayed,
And all the dark disguises of the town ;
The frantic strivings after more, that choke
The holy fact of life, which single here
Sits at the heart and bids the rest be still.

V

WHEN the low sun descends on Hamlet hill
And this my maple throws a longer line
Of lengthening shadow down across the slope,
Then has a day departed, casting yet
A lingering light from sidelong slopes and hills
That run into the west. Much would I love
One passing day to live beneath my tree,
And there within its shadow on the earth
Move with the moving sun a mutual course.
First in the dawning is the crystal light
Scarce sprinkled o'er the hill, while all the heaven
Sheds seeming equal brightness on the world ;

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

But after comes the round, revealing sun,
To mark his influence and define the earth,
Giving my tree its shadow on the ground.
And therein would I rest and through the day
Follow it lengthening downward past the noon;
See the light grasses and the browsèd tufts
Of pasture herbage tremble in the sun,
Pale upland asters, dusty goldenrod,
And all the autumn flowering of the fields;
Then feel them sink to quietness within
The slow advancing shadow. I should find
A joy in the light liftings of the leaves,
Breeze-shifted shadows trembling, little rays
Of unexpected light along the ground.
Then as the day avancèd to its fall
And this my maple's shadow crept along
Downward, I should forget the lesser life
Of grass blade and of sunny pebble-stone,
Feeling the great fact of the day's decline,
The coming of the hour when all the hill
Would cast its shadow; of the later night,
The shadow of the earth. Thus would I live,
And one day thus bid welcome and depart.

P O E M S



A. D. MDCCCXCVIII

TO CITRIODORA

*I turn and see you passing in the street
When you are not. I take another way,
Lest missing you the fragrance of the day
Exhale, and I know not that it is sweet.
And marking you I follow, and when we meet
Love laughs to see how sudden I am gay;
Sweetens the air with fragrance like a spray
Of sweet verberna, and bids my heart to beat.*

*Love laughs; and girls that take you by the hand,
Know that a sweet thing has befallen them;
And women give their hearts into your heart.
There is, I think, no man in all the land
But would be glad to touch your garment's hem.
And I, I love you with a love apart.*

I

SPINOZA polished glasses clear
To view the heavenly hemisphere ;
I verses, that my friend therethrough
My arc of earth may rightly view.

II

IF one should call my branching verse
Bundles of fagot sticks, or worse,
Each bush, I pray, let shed perfume,
And burn with fire and not consume ;
And may each branch, like Aaron's rod,
Bud and betray the vital god.

III

BROTHER, Time is a thing how slight !
Day lifts and falls, and it is night.
Rome stands an hour, and the green leaf
Buds into being bright and brief.
For us, God has at least in store
One shining moment, less or more.
Seize, then, what mellow sun we may,
To light us in the darker day.

POEMS

IV

“**B**ELIEVE in me !” Lord, who art thou
That bid’st me to believe in thee ?
I have my life to live, and now
Thy yoke would but a burden be ;
I would be free.

“ Come, follow me ! ” Nay, Lord, my way
Is wide of thine along the sea ;
Among the hills I love to stray,
Nor walks there anyone with me ;
Why I with thee ?

V

MARCH 20

“**R**ETURN, return !” the unheard cry
Of robins in the upper sky,
As by and long this barren coast,
In March comes up the southern host.

Low-anchored in the tangled swale
I mark them slant along the gale,
At speed, with every feather set
For some more distant harbor yet.

POEMS

Around me is the mellow lisp
Of bluebirds warbling, and the crisp
Chick ! of the sparrow, and the cheer
Of homing robins harbored here.

No forward aspen-leaf or oak
Has through his leathern jacket broke ;
The grass puts up a doubtful wing ;
The hazel censers coldly swing.

But maple-buds, new fashionèd
On every stem, are tipped with red.
Green, saffern-flushing osiers glow
Above the wakened waters' flow.

Year in, year out, the fire of spring
Burns through its ashen covering,
Bursts up in flower and scent and song,
And drives the laggard March along.

Year after year the birds will fly
Along this same gray, mortal sky.
Praise God I see them and can say,
Another year, another day !

POEMS

VI

THE SPARROW

THE morning lay divinely bright
Across near field and distant height.
From his high tower the influent sun
Controlled the shifting tides of air,
Which first in flow would lightly run,
Then fall in ebb of radiance rare.

One sparrow on an elm-tree high
Conceived the day as fair as I.
Midway the high bank of the tree
He sat upon a beakèd branch,
And poured into the engulfing sea
His music's slender avalanche.

His pipe was sharp, his numbers few,
And caught no ear but me and you.
Yet forth upon his promontory
He stood in the wide sea of air,
And bore his witness to the glory
With all the heart a thrush might dare.

POEMS

VII

PRESTO

QUICK-fingered Spring her wand choragic,
A cherry branch, has waved in air ;
And swift by arts of natural magic
The clustered cherry-blooms are there.

You 've seen the children in their pastime
Plunge rods into a syrop thick,
Three times or four, and at the last time
Hold up in joy a candy-stick.

You 've seen a chemist, quick and curious,
Observe a liquid saturate,
And mark, when least the jar seemed furious,
The crystal-flowers precipitate.

And now, of cherry-blooms creator
Ere yet the woods and walks are green,
Rose-fingered prestidigitator,
Young chemic Spring at work you 've seen

POEMS

VIII

IN DOVE COTTAGE GARDEN

ON the terrace lies the sunlight, fretted with
the shade

Of the wilding apple-orchard Wordsworth made.

Sunlight falls upon the aspen, and the cedar glows
Like the laurel or the climbing Christmas rose.

Through green-golden vistas downward if your
glances fall,
Hardly would you guess the cottage there at all.

Bines of bryony and bramble overhang the green
Of the crowding scarlet-runner and the bean.

But I mark one quiet casement, ivy-covered still.
There he sat, I think, and loved this little hill;

Loved the rocky stair that led him upward to the
seat
Coleridge fashioned; loved the fragrant, high
retreat

In the wood above the garden. There he walked,
and there

In his heart the beauty gathered to a prayer.

POEMS

In the sunshine by the cottage doorway I can see,
In among her Christmas roses, Dorothy.

Deeper joy and truer service, fuller draught of life,
Came I doubt not to the sister, and the wife.

Laurel, it may be, too early on his brow he set,
And the thorn of life too lightly could forget.

Dorothy, wild heart and woman, chose the better
way,
Met the world with love and service every day.

Love for life and life for loving, and the poet's part
Is to love his life and, living, love his art.

But the shadow from the fellside falls, and all the
scene
Melts and runs, green-gold to slumbrous golden-
green.

Showers of golden light on Grasmere tremble into
shade,
While the garden grasses gather blade with blade ;

And one patient robin-redbreast, waiting, waiting
long,
Seals the twilight in the garden with a song.

POEMS

IX

A WREATH OF BUDS AND LAVENDER

DEATH has a power to fright the soul,
And unseat courage from control.

But when, by love and sorrow led,
I passed your door and looked, with dread
To see the symbols of the dead ;

And found, in place of black despair,
Which I all-looked for, hanging there
A wreath of buds and lavender ;

I blessed the heart that would out-brave,
For love, the terror of the grave.

X

SWEET THORN

WHAT is St. Francis' flower? 'T is not
The daisy nor the melilot,
Nor that white little flower that springs
In Grasmere's quiet garden-plot.

POEMS

'Tis not the lily-flower that blows
In some high heaven of repose.

'Tis not the sorrow of the thorn,
Nor utter passion of the rose.

It is the wild-heart eglantine,
(Sweet bush to a far sweeter wine),

With joy for man, sweet-thorn for Christ,
Not pagan all, not all divine.

XI

SILKWEED

LIGHTER than dandelion down,
Or feathers from the white moth's wing,
Out of the gates of bramble-town
The silkweed goes a-gypsying.

Too fair to fly in autumn's rout,
All winter in the sheath it lay ;
But now, when spring is pushing out,
The zephyr calls, "Away ! Away !"

Through mullein, bramble, brake, and fern,
Up from their cradle-spring they fly,
Beyond the boundary wall to turn
And voyage through the friendly sky.

POEMS

Softly, as if instinct with thought,
They float and drift, delay and turn ;
And one avoids and one is caught
Between an oak-leaf and a fern.

And one holds by an airy line
The spider drew from tree to tree ;
And if the web is light and fine,
'T is not so light and fine as he !

And one goes questing up the wall
As if to find a door ; and then,
As if he did not care at all,
Goes over and adown the glen.

And all in airiest fashion fare
Adventuring, as if, indeed,
'T were not so grave a thing to bear
The burden of a seed !

POEMS

XII

THE FIRE-FLY

TO-DAY as writing in the park
I sat, came twilight and the dark.
There as I watched the color run
In waves above the sunken sun,
A lightning-bug, (for candle), took
His post just here upon my book.
His wing he raised, his golden urn
Of fire he let a moment burn.
Pray, for his sake, behold this line
With a not common brightness shine.

XIII

CLEAR AND FAR

HOW clear, when 't is most far from clear,
Far sounds across the dark you hear :
Approaching wheels, when in the lane
The mist is turning into rain ;
A baying hound below the hill ;
A train, when all the night is still.
The silent air, now dense and drowned,
A carriage makes for every sound.
How far, when 't is from clear most far,
Most clear at night far noises are.

POEMS

XIV

ARCHITECTURE

YOU 'VE seen a sky, besprent with mist
Across the sleepy amethyst,
Break when the western wind has sent
His harriers to the orient.

Then in the azure deeps
Gathers the mist and sleeps
In snowy towering heaps.

You 've seen the leafy storm of May
Sweep the brown April earth like spray,
And round some gray stem, bare of late,
In full and body nucleate.

Then all the earliest trees
Hang out upon the breeze
Their perfumed greeneries.

In the vexed heaven of the mind
You 've seen a fresh, irradiant wind
Clear all and set in order fair
The gray untextured vapors there.

Then quick from every part
The towering fancies start
In frame and form of art.

POEMS

XV

TO A PINE-TREE

IF I could stand in such a plain,
With such bright sap in every vein;
Could throw upon so blue an air,
Branches so light and strong and fair;

If I could sink my roots so deep
In darkness where the spirits creep,
So broadly base, so firmly rear
My stem in such an atmosphere;

If I could balance and reveal
So utterly from head to heel
The music I was born to be,
In strophe and antistrophe;

Thou 'dst not more nobly stand and shine
Than I, proud Atlantean pine.

XVI

OPAL

PALE as a pearl the morning lay
In cloud diaphanous and gray;
While slow the smothered sun goes by
A smouldering opal in the sky.

POEMS

Faint color in the wood he throws
Like scattered petals of a rose ;
And lays by every stem a hue
Most sagely, delicately blue.

XVII

MORNING

NOT least, 't is ever my delight
To drink the early morning light ;
To take the air upon my tongue
And taste it while the day is young.
 So let my solace be the breath
 Of morning, when I move to death.

XVIII

I KNOW not what it is, but when I pass
Some running bit of water by the way,
A river brimming silver in the grass,
And rippled by a trailing alder-spray,

Hold in my heart I cannot from a cry,
It is so joyful at the merry sight ;
So gracious is the water running by,
So full the simple grass is of delight.

POEMS

And if by chance a redwing, passing near,
Should light beside me in the alder-tree;
And if, above the ripple, I should hear
The lusty conversation of the bee,

I think that I should lift my voice and sing;
I know that I should laugh and look around,
As if to catch the meadows answering,
As if expecting whispers from the ground.

XIX

ANADYOMENE

GIVE o'er the strife ! The poet cries
The maiden mercy, in whose eyes
He sees the light of paradise.

Beyond the coppice, at the edge
Where ends the poet's Privilege
Along the lake, in June one day
I sat to meditate this lay;
Wherein, forgetting Love, I planned
To sing the sea and sky and land.
And first, the picture — all the scene
A dark uninterrupted green.
No flower uplifted from the floor
Breaks from the forest to the shore.

POEMS

No daffodil that nods along
The blossom's banks of English song ;
Myrtles nor roses, that entwine
In many a fragrant Attic line,
Here spring, to aid while I rehearse
The homely numbers of my verse.
Poppy nor violet is here,
Where fern, with cornel and severe
Bay, and the low-set laurel shine
Beneath a sombre front of pine.
Here as I lay among the brakes
I watched the bright, green forest-snakes,
The wasp go over, and the toad
Sit undecided of his road ;
And sudden, from a tufted top,
The gray, silk-cinctured spider drop.
Out of the high, benignant blue
The earth a golden opiate drew.
Low-lying, level waves of heat
Along the glassèd waters beat.
Each ashen stem and each green leaf
Lay sunned asleep ; and every sheaf
Of needles, glittering on the pines,
Inwove the light in glancing lines,
Until I too had slept, ere this,
But for the chimes I would not miss.

What sound was there ? A chipping bird
That idly in the bushes stirred ;

POEMS

A locust droning in the brake ;
The hum the darting midges make.
What sound was there ? A sudden wind
That caught the ripples from behind
And kissed them as they ran ; that drave
The whispering rout within the cave
In rocks below me where I lay.
You would have said 't was elves at play,
With muffled hammers keeping time
Beneath the wave in some cool chime
On amber bells, — k-link, k-lunk,
(With quiet joy the sound I drunk),
K-link, k-lunk ! Now high, now low,
The chimes came bubbling from below.
If I could get into my rhymes
The lapping music of the chimes,
All men who read would run once more
To hear the ripples on the shore.
Then, as the last light wave of air
Drew off in ebb and failure there,
Fell back, and faintly, far away,
Broke in the pines across the bay,
Low on the fall and silence crept
A sudden sound, then sank and slept.
Again, in pulse and faint, awoke
In matted leaves of pine and oak,
Where through the jungle of the grass
The armies of the emmets pass.

POEMS

Then on that cess and failure came,
As from a crypt and smothered flame,
An incense, on the fall and swell
Of every piny thurible.
No scent of rose or spices rare
Perfumed the quiet courses there ;
No scattered homely mint and thyme
Wove in the sun an odorous rhyme ;
But June upon the air abroad
Summoned the soul of leaf and sod,
Shot with the glamour, and divine
With the o'er-mastering scent of pine.

Ah Summer, Summer ! Fragrant June,
Sweet as a moth from the cocoon !
My thoughts in winter come and go
As aimless as the errant snow ;
Or lie, by wind and weather pressed,
A dumb conservator at best.
But April comes, and to the plain
They fall and labor with the rain ;
Sing as they fall and fallen, jet
Their life into the violet ;
And measure, in this homely rune,
The drowsy summer-song of June.

This was the picture ; this the green
And golden magic of the scene ;
The lapping music, and the boon

POEMS

Delight of lotos-drowsy June,
Ungraced and unadorned. Was heard
No mellow-ringing song of bird ;
No grace of woven grasses spread,
With white and purple diaped
Of blooms, to strike and snare the sense
With jets of odorous frankincense.
But peaceful as I lay and took
These fancies down, (to make my book),
Out of the lake, in spite of me,
She rose, Anadyomene !

Give o'er the strife ! The poet cries
The maiden mercy, in whose eyes
He sees the light of paradise.
She came, and shot through that dull clime
Sharp scent of marjoram and thyme,
Cool vervain, and the forest rang
Quick with the song my own heart sang.
She came, with love, and in one ray
Redeemed the dulness of the day,
Until the world, (sea, sky, and land),
Lay in the hollow of her hand.

POEMS

XX

PROCESSIONAL

BENEATH the roof-tree of the dark,
Like Noah shut within the ark,
I welcome from the waste of night
The earliest olive-branch of light.

Like Jacob, I my load of sleep
Cast off and see the angels creep,
Processional in bright array
Up the wide avenues of day ;

See with Isaiah one who flies
From that high orient sacrifice,
Who, with a live coal in his hand,
Touches to voice th' unpurgèd land.

Then swift from hazel copse and brake
The voices, voices, voices wake,
In twilight woods, in choired bush,
Antiphonal to the sweet thrush.

Like rain across the eastern hill
The dropping harmonies distil,
Or run upon the roseate sky
In silver bars of melody.

POEMS

The notes upon the chorded air
Vibrate in thrilling pulse of prayer,
And on my heart responses win,
The harp without, the harp within.

Each morning on the walls of night
Unfolds the oriflamme of light.
Each morning westward with the sun,
A tide of song, the voices run ;

A hint of that clear day of gold
The dewy morn has aye foretold,
When these fresh voices shall prolong
An everlasting morning-song.

XXI

TO A BULL-FROG

THOU hoarse Aristophanic mime,
Grotesque Silenus of the slime,
That dar'st to lift a comic voice
Where thrushes worship and rejoice,

When I would build, apart from space,
A simple shrine with simple grace,
And lift the walls and arches there
Of all that's high-distilled and fair,

POEMS

God knows, who is the architect
Of all I summon and reject,
Thy mask is there, and with the choir
Thy hoary bass-note will aspire.

XXII

ROSE IN GRAY

LIGHTLY moves the silver moon
Through these glimmering nights of June,
Lightly falls, and in the shine
Of her moon-rays hyaline,
Lifts the nightfall and the hush
From the red rose on the bush,
And the rose's heart discovers
To her nightly wandering lovers

I could tell you, Phyllis dear,
How the rose looked faint and clear
In the moonlight ; how she burned
Like the sacred fire inurned ;
Distant, with the far-withdrawn
Sweet shamefacedness of dawn ;
Quaintly cool, with yet the glow
Of a lamp through falling snow.

POEMS

So ; but when I whisper, " Sweet,
Take my hand, come let us see 't,"
'T is the very smothered rose
In your milk-white cheek that glows.

XXIII

TO FLOWERS

VITAL breathings of delight
Flush your cheeks with blue and gold,
Painted bannerets of light,
Picketed 'twixt cold and cold.

Yet with purpose bear ye must
Seasoned cannikins of fruit,
Ere the red autumnal rust
Crinkles downward to the root.

This your little year, as ours,
Blossoms cannot make sublime.
Ye are rooted in the hours,
Ye are passengers of time.

POEMS

XXIV

ON COMING OF AGE

THROUGH days wherein I heard no purpose
 speak,
Through years that passed me as a quiet stream,
I dreamed and did not seek ; to-day I seek
 Who may no longer dream.

XXV

IT is long waiting for the dear companions,
The friends that come not, though God knows I
 need them.
I smile and wait ; and yet
The heart will fret.

A white cloud in the east is shining ; sadly
I see ; my heart is all too full of longing,
 With the old-time delight
 To view the sight.

Wherefore I turn and in the eyes of women,
In the strong hands of men, seek compensation.
 My prayer begins and ends,
 God give me friends.

POEMS

XXVI

MARY, when the wild-rose
Blossomed on the vine,
Hearts were light, eyes were bright,
But none so bright as thine.

Lightly the month of May,
Sweet bud of June,
Opened like a rose in gray,
Under the moon.

When the heart of summer
Withered with rust,
Bitter blows laid the rose
Broken in the dust.

Crystal wells, amber wells,
On the hills of blue,
Chiming like silver bells
When the heart is true,

Boom with the billows
On the black shore ;
Sweetness to bitterness
Forevermore.

POEMS

Sweetly the waters ran,
 (Wild rose for thee);
The fountains of the heart of man
 Are bitter like the sea.

XXVII

IN A GARDEN

SWEET, my Sweet, by the winding-water
Sit and sing as the days go by.
(What if the sounding sea had taught her
 Lust of life and the fear to die!)

Here in the circuit thou hast drawn
 Consult the mayflower and the dew;
And peace attend thee on the lawn,
 Beneath a sky forever blue.

The green be grateful to thine eyes,
 The blue a benediction be;
The waters bless thee where they rise;
 But look not downward to the sea.

A limpid source of water, silver
 Bubbling up through golden sand,
Leads, ah! down to the rolling river,
 Down, ah, down! to the sounding strand.

POEMS

There the waves on the shifting margent,
Night and day with a rhythmic roar,
Beat and batter the black and argent
Reef and rock of the sullen shore.

Spring will rise with a broken wing,
Crippled in leaf and bud and stem ;
The winding-water cease to sing,
The dawn will drop her diadem,

When thou but once beyond the pale
Hast learned to look, or dared to see
The sunrise shattered in the gale,
The brazen terror of the sea.

Rather, at rest in what is thine,
Sip thou the honey as it flows,
Nor lift thy wing above the line,
A blind bee in a garden-close.

POEMS

XXVIII

NEPTUNIAN

MIDWAY the height of one sheer granite
rock

I sat in face of the barbarian sea,
And heard the god, out of the dreadful, deep,
Midmost Atlantic summoning strength and here,
In accents clear above the sullen roar
Of all his waves, condemn the jutting world.

“Populous Egypt was a realm and ruled
By men that strove when Greece was yet unborn.
I strive not, yet is Pharaoh deep in death,
And still the seas sweep unappeased and new.
Kings were ere Priam. Knew ye not? I hold
The substance, in my swift and solvent brine,
Of all the race since Adam, and of strange,
Unfeatured men ere Paradise. And I
Sang to them all and cradled them and drank
Their breath, their dust, their family and fame.
Earth the grain-giver in my hands I hold,
And if I will I love and if I will
Hate, and I know no master but the sun,
Who drinks the years up in a thin blue flame.
From me the rivers and the rain from me
Lead down their due-returning silver streams
In circuit just; and all the gulfs are mine

POEMS

Beneath the earth that echo of the deep.
Laugh then, be glad ! E'en though I swallow down,
To rock upon my oozy floor, the hulls
Of odd ten thousand hurrying ships. They swell
And mantle o'er with all the amorous life
Ye reckon not of, and in a year are gone.
Laugh and be glad ! Tremble and fear ! I beat,
Beneath the shining forward of the dawn,
The dim high noon, and the red stars at night,
Daylight and dark forever I beat, I beat
The bulwarks of the shore, daylight and dark,
With the blue night about me and the dawn."

On billow billow rolling, in the press
Confounded of the furious, following surge,
Thunders the Deep, intolerant and sublime ;
Gray-heart and grim to spurn of this black rock
The temerarious front, and here to wrench
The frame of earth aside before the sea.

XXIX

SHAKESPEARE

THROUGH time untimed, if truly great,
a Name
Reverence compels and, that forgotten, shame.
But in the stress of living you shall scan,
Yea, touch and censure, great or small, the Man.

POEMS

XXX

THE WATER-CLOCK

EVER with fainter pulse and throw
The heart's red clepsydra will flow.
Then lest the drops run on to waste,
Make haste, for love of life, make haste !

XXXI

WE welcome lightly and with ease
The gifts which providence foresees.
But relish more the sudden grants
Of unexpected circumstance.

XXXII

IN AUGUST

WHEN the petal falls and lies
Wrinkled like a leaf that dies,
When the flower that once was merry
Sobers to the russet berry,
When the rose and hawthorn draws
Slowly down to hips and haws,
'T is the season birds are mute,
'Twixt the flower and the fruit.

POEMS

XXXIII

DOG-DAYS

EVERY morning dies the sun
On the eastern horizon,
And a blazing god is born
From the white egg of the morn.

Then the chorus that saluted
Rosy-fingered dawn is muted,
And the spirits of the earth
Shrink beneath that fiery birth.

Underneath the green they lie
Where a water-brook goes by ;
In a cowslip or, in turn,
Couched below a fragrant fern.

You shall find them in the shadow
Where the woodside meets the meadow ;
Lift the arum, they are there
Breathing some cool well of air ;

Waiting in the hopeful grass
Till the fiery day shall pass,
Till the flame is laid to rest
On the red hearse of the west.

POEMS

XXXIV

THROUGH rain the forest, roof and floor,
Is green as it was ne'er before.
And, dense along the forest-track,
The boles of trees were ne'er so black.

Each driving cataract of rain
The picture dyes a deeper stain.
Yet, though the black be blacker seen,
More vivid glows the vital green.

XXXV

FAGOTS

IN Autumn, as the year comes round,
(The seasons fall without a sound),
By slow and stealth an ashen hue
Comes on the green, comes on the blue.

The sticks I burned beneath a larch
The first bright day of tawny March,
Gave out their heat and fell away
Successive into rose and gray.

Thus covertly, and term by term,
Like as the year, I grow infirm;
Thus spend my substance like the fire,
And like the last cold ash expire.

POEMS

XXXVI

OCTOBER 10

THIS cool white morning by the wall
How welcome does the sunlight fall
To the curled aster, with its blue
Close-folded petals, out of view.
They open shining to the sun,
As if their year had just begun ;
Nor guess, (prophetic in the blast),
That this warm day may be the last.

XXXVII

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are
your ways my ways, saith the Lord.*

GOD, thou art good, but not to me.
Some dark, some high and holier plan
Is hid beyond the world with thee.

To the immortals, not to man,
God, thou art good.

I do conceive thee wholly wise,
And good beyond the power of touch.
Eternal lovingkindness lies
In all thy purposes ; so much
I do conceive.

POEMS

I do confess in thee above,
All that thy lovers have to thee
Ascribed, of fellowship and love.
The words of Jesus on the tree
I do confess.

Into thy hands I do commend
My spirit. All thy ways I trust ;
In fear acknowledge to the end
Thy will, and perish with the dust
Into thy hands.

God, thou art good, but not to man.
Thy purposes do not contain
The mighty things I hope. Thy plan
Looks past humanity and pain.
God, thou art good.

XXXVIII

THE PINE-TREE

WHEN blood was in my heart like wine
I crept beneath a branching pine ;
With passion drank the piny breath
And no thought further than death.

POEMS

Now blood is colder and instead
I mind the liquor of the head,
Wherein I see, as in a glass,
The pine decay, the season pass.

And I have known, with sudden sight,
A shadow from the pine like night,
And sorrowing breezes, verse by verse,
Lament above the spirit's hearse ;

And found some comfort, but not all,
Where the red needles wove a pall,
To mark through that dead carpet shine
The promise of a seedling pine.

XXXIX

I DARE not think that thou art by, to stand
And face omnipotence so near at hand !
When I consider thee how must I shrink,
How must I say, I do not understand,
I dare not think !

I cannot stand before the thought of thee,
Infinite Fulness of Eternity !
So close that all the outlines of the land
Are lost, — in the inflowing of thy sea
I cannot stand.

POEMS

I think of thee, and as the crystal bowl
Is broken and the waters of the soul
Go down to death within the crystal sea,
I faint and fail when, (thou, the perfect whole),
I think of thee.

XL

THE ANCHOR

AS when, these autumn days, I ride
Along the painted country-side,
Meadow and way and wood go by,
A never-ending race,
But yet, beyond their passing, my
Wachusett holds his place ;

So let each wingèd month and year
Sweep into place and disappear ;
In order seen and loved, be sure !
Ere ends its period ;
But let, beyond them all, endure
One year, and that be God.

XLI

THE frost has walked across my world,
Has killed the shallows and has curled
The ferns. Ah, Summer, at what cost,
For harvest, you invite the frost !

POEMS

XLII

THE QUIET HARVEST

WITHIN a thicket ere the sun
Was up, I heard a whisper run.
Each bush and tree was bidding, now,
Its yellow leaves forsake the bough.
And each leaf, having had its day,
Stepped down to earth the shortest way.

In April budding on the tree ;
In hot July full-blown and free ;
October bids them no more be.
I had, I think, as fair a spring ;
July let equal fortune bring ;
God give as quiet harvesting.

XLIII

THE MAPLE-TREE

DAY after day I travel down
From Billerica to the town ;
Day after day, in passing by
A cedar-pasture, gray and high,
See, shining clear and far, (a mile),
The white church-steeple of Carlisle ;
And bright between Carlisle and me,
Daily a glowing maple-tree.

POEMS

Suffused with yellow, every part
Is burning saffron at the heart.
Upwards and warm the colors gain
From ruddy gold to claret-stain;
And downward tending, lightly lean
To citron yellow and cold green.
Day after autumn day it still
More deeply burns against the hill.
And now I've made of it a type
Of hopes, like mine, near autumn-ripe,
And watch, intent, which first shall be,
The consummation of the tree,
Or that gold harvest-hope prepared for me.

XLIV

IN MEMORIAM.—PATSEY

MAXWELL, the master, built above
His dog this testament of love,
Where, on a granite block incised,
These words told how the dog was prized:

“Here Patsey lies, by bitter chance
Dead ere his time, by fates unruly;
Stranger, regard this circumstance
And solemn rite; we loved him truly.”

POEMS

And quite as if 't had been a man,
The slow foot of the moss began,
Envious, to mar this simple state,
And the poor name t' obliterate.

XLV

THE ivy leaves, (behind the shed),
Turned bright and blushed a rosy red.
Bit by the frost they sobered down,
And now can show but russet-brown.
Another frost and they will fall,
And there will be no leaves at all.
Thus down, through scarlet, gray, and dun,
The earth will fall into the sun.

XLVI

GREEK AND CHRISTIAN

MAKE haste, my soul, the Wise Man whispered, go!
Gather the golden ears before the snow;
There is no harvest after death. But low,
The Shining One replied, It is not so.

POEMS

XLVII

DISSOLUTION

THE leaf will fall, through green and gold,
To dissolution in the mould.

The tree will fall, and in the sod
Complete its final period.

The night will die when one bright ray
Shoots up and beckons in the day.

And that bright ray in turn will lie
Coffined with all bright things that die;

Swept out to space, when on this shore
Leaf, tree, the earth, (which all upbore),
And day and night shall be no more.

XLVIII

NOVEMBER

THE sun, this old November,
Across the sodden slope,
May bid the heart remember,
But cannot bid it hope.

POEMS

XLIX

AGAINST FORGIVENESS

WE do not ask to be forgiven,
Nor out of earth to win
An unpremeditated heaven,
Nor quit the claim of sin.

Our acts be on our head. As yet
While masterful we live,
The world we ask not to forget,
Nor ask God to forgive.

L

CONFESSION

IN Adam's sin
Did I begin.

With toil and sweat
My bread I get ;

At once, with Abel
Spread my table,

Rebel with Cain
And sin again.

POEMS

O'er all the earth,
(Which is my birth),

I joy to find
My human kind ;

Read in the sky
That I must die,

Yet needs must sing
When it is spring.

And though I run
Before the sun,

By autumn brought
To steady thought,

I still rehearse
The primal curse,

And in the snow
Confess my woe.

Yet here apart,
Deep in my heart,

Kin to the sod
I wait for God.

POEMS

LI

NOVEMBER-BLIND

IN this November though I bend
My heart I cannot find a friend
About the wood. The green is down
From water-mead to forest crown;
(Save where the myrtle in the lane
Paints the gray sod an emerald stain;
Save where the pines below the hill
Glow with the suns of summer still).
The hardy juniper to dust
Corrodes in this autumnal rust.
The goldenrod and aster-head
Are black and broke and more than dead.
This morning, fog about the height
Creeps up and chokes the growing light;
Lies like a blanket through the wood,
And doubly trebles solitude.
And when the sun above the mist
Shall clear a space of amethyst,
He too shall hunt, November-blind,
A friend about the wood to find.

POEMS

LII

WINTER A CAVERN

THROUGH dim November down as through
an arch,
I move in cavern darkness until March ;
Whence looking back, I can no more remember,
For joy, the days sinister since November.

LIII

ON A WEED UNCOVERED BY THE RAINS IN DECEMBER

IN all its grace This was the Solomon's Seal,
When summer shone. Now winter glooms,
and here
On flower and stalk has set his iron heel.
Another year, my life, another year !

LIV

DECEMBER

NEW friends forbear, and let old friends
remember
With pity him who ends his course to-day ;
Nor heap with scorn his grave in dead December
Whose life bore golden promises in May.

POEMS

LV

ISAIAH VI : 13

“ **A** S a teil-tree or an oak,”
So the ancient prophet spoke,
“ Whose heart remaineth when they shed
Their leaves ! ” The prophet now is dead,
But on a girl his mantle falls
And heartens other funerals.

December stood in confidence,
Winter long had pitched his tents,
When she and I together came
Along a way without a name;
And there she bade me lift my head
The while those verses old she said.

A knotted oak above the snow
I saw within a pasture grow ;
A sturdy tree, not over high, —
Some several inches more than I.
His leaves were gone, but in the air
His branches other beauty wear.

About him little whips of wind
A wreath of winter sunlight bind.

POEMS

The snow upon his feet is cold,
But in his heart is more than gold.
And light that only winter knows
Springs up to blossom on the snows.

LVI

NEW ENGLAND

WHOE'ER thou art, who walkest there
Where God first taught my feet to roam,
Breathe but my name into the air,
I am content, for that is home.

A sense, a color comes to me,
Of baybushes that heavy lie
With juniper along the sea,
And the blue sea along the sky.

New England is my home; 't is there
I love the pagan sun and moon.
'T is there I love the growing year,
December and young-summer June.

I'd rather love one blade of grass
That grows on one New England hill,
Than drain the whole world in the glass
Of fortune, when the heart is still.

POEMS

LVII

SERENE

THIS crystal sapphire of the sky
Is saner far than you and I,
Who in our passions and our dreams
Run evermore to wild extremes.

The pure perfection of the sea
Lies not in mirth and tragedy;
But like the silence of the snows
In breadth of beauty and repose.

God give one moment, ere we die,
As crystal clear as the blue sky,
Serene as ocean, white as snow,
And glowing as the heavens glow.

LVIII

FROM Billerica forth I send
My book. Pray take it for a friend.
Or should it chance offend you, know
It is not willingly your foe.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS



A.D. MDCCCCI

I

NOT all the world can banish from my eyes
The simple glories of the day's sunrise;
Not circumstance nor fate e'er drive away
The clear perfection of one summer day,
Nor blot quite wholly from my sight
The singing tumult of the mystic night.

II

FOR MARCH 20

NOW colored lights of morning rise
And paint the skies
With warmer dyes,
A thousand times
More bright, more rare
As summer climbs
The northern stair;
To where,
Expecting them with joy and song,
(Though winter still be on the hill),
Sits March, his verdant vale along,
And pipes for Summer with a will.

Bright jets of flame, the crocus buds
Out of their beds
Lift up their heads;

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Then with a spring
Above the mold,
Each purple wing,
Each wing of gold,
Unfold;
Bright correspondents in the grass
Of that high incandescent sun,
Whose bending angels, as they pass,
Light up the flowers one by one.

III

THE faithful mullein, day by day,
Is up and out beside the way,
Or on the upland pasture blows
Beside the rockrose and the rose.

Would heaven had granted me a grace
One half so perfect as thy face,
Compounded of so pure a metal
As thy five-foliate golden petal.

IV

A MARCH FLAW

THE fickle wind, by ebb and flaw,
Wavers uncertain as a girl:
The fire delays and will not draw:
The smoke creeps out in lip and curl;

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Will not adventure in the skies,
But level on the pasture lies,
As if it sought and could not find
A purpose equal to its mind.

V

HERE by the brimming April streams,
Here is the valley of my dreams.

Every garden place is seen
Starting up in flames of green ;

Breaking forth in yellow gold
Through the blanket of the mold.

Slow unfolded, one by one,
Lantern leaves hang in the sun,

Like the butterflies of June
Weak and wet from the cocoon.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

VI

THE bobolink that sweetly sings
Although the rain is on his wings ;
The light in darkness of the moon
That builds by night another noon ;

· · · · ·
Mine, mine, mine, all mine !
The golden light in the sunset pine ;
The flush green heart of the maple spray
When the sap comes up in the month of May ;
The multitudinous, close advance
Of the singing grass and the little plants ;
The deep, resilient, lusty feel
Of the turfy carpet under heel ;
And a wakened heart, that lifts and fills
Like meadows in the April hills,
Or when the bottom and the plain
Are filled with the autumnal rain.

VII

APPLE-BLOSSOMS

LET men remember, when they pray,
The rose and silver dawns of May,
Most palely, spiritually gray ;

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

The sky above the blossomed trees,
Pale as December Arctic seas,
Pure as the white anemones.

.

On such a morning, lightly swung
By the chance song a bluebird sung,
The silence like an incense hung.

A rod away, you 'd scarcely know
If these were apple-blooms ablowl
Or a reverted April snow;

But over all the sentient earth
Young lantern-leaves, for joy of birth,
Hung out the saffron hues of mirth.

The honeysucker wove his loom
Of busy noise from plume to plume
Of rosy-clustered apple-bloom.

Went by the bee; the butterfly
On soft and papery wings went by,
Beneath his low, sufficient sky.

And on a sudden flaw and swell,
If 't were a petal white that fell,
Or a blown moth, you 'd hardly tell,

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

So soft the air, so hung with scents
That fell from these white, flowery tents
On odorous beds of innocents.

The church bells, by the distance drowned,
Came to me like the ghost of sound,
Soft-choired with birds that sang around ;

And dim as distance were the blue
Slopes, and the hills I thought I knew,
Behind the mist, and shining through.

VIII

ROLL down, roll down, thou darkling earth,
To the eastern shores of light,
Where the plashing waves of the morning's birth
Sweep up the coasts of night.

IX

HOT days like this will wound or bless,
At home as in the wilderness.
The wind, with burning feet,
Lingers along the wheat ;
146

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

The honeysuckle droops;
The scarlet poppy stoops,
And on the garden-bed
Lays down her silken head.

So in the mountain walk
Of untrod Moosilauke
The purple orchis turns
Black, and the cornel burns.
Through the dead banks of haze
The tongues of heaven blaze;
And life draws down from flower and shoot,
To lie in secret at the root.

X

WORN with the city, out I go,
Where the cool green plantations grow;
With curious eye observe the shine
Of silver on the stalwart pine,
The beech and oak; on the granite fells
See the sharp cedar-sentinels
Advance, each one a shafted thyrses,
Cone-capped, among the javelin firs.
Involved by barriers, and perplexed,
By mere unyielding pavement vexed,
In spirit from the town I run
To meet the gracious horizon,

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Which patient round my centre lies
With axle pointed in the skies;
In th' unblockaded blue to find
A clean refreshment for the mind.

XI

OCTOBER 10

SUCH days as this I 've but to look
And add a page more to my book.
A bramble, winding o'er the wall,
A scarlet torrent in the Fall;
Sere, yellow leaves, whirled by the train,
To scatter in a golden rain;
A crumpled fern; — it is enough,
For all the world is poet's stuff,
And shall contribute to his book,
So 't gives the joy the poet took.

XII

ON THE TENTH OF OCTOBER

YOU 'LL not believe the aspen leaf
(Whose season you would say was brief)
Hangs long and greener on the tree
Than sycamore, than hickory.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

The elm-leaf crumbles brown ; the oak
Is even sooner gray and broke.

The maple reddens, and the ash
Leaps up and falls at Autumn's lash ;

The aspen leaf will longest stay,
Be sure ; I saw them green to-day.

XIII

UP from hill and meadow burning,
Fumes of Autumn in the air ;
Birds in dusty blue returning,
Passing on their southern fare.

Color, color, scent and savor,
How they penetrate the heart,
Wake the old delicious quaver ; —
That is Nature, that is Art.

XIV

THREE camping grounds I passed to-day,
Where, in the months gone by,
We sat to watch the kettle boil,
And watch the bacon fry.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

To-day the needles on the place
Have fallen thick and sere.
Ah ! we are growing old apace,
Year falling after year.

Where we were born, and where we die,
Or where we sat at pot,
Oblivion, like the leaves, shall lie,
And cover up the spot.

XV

PRAYER FOR GRACE

THE eager frost through all the night
The oak and walnut leaves did bite.
To-day the sun, across the dell,
Shone on them warmly, and they fell.
Each leaf, the scarlet and the yellow,
Lay quietly beside his fellow.

Pray when the frost shall find in place
Me, I may fall with such a grace,
And come as quickly to my place.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XVI

IN NOVEMBER

JUNIPER gentle and rosemarie !
There's neat brown cones on the yellow larch,
With scarlet haws on the gray thorn-tree.
Ah, the year is long since the first of March !

A leaf is welcome along the lane,
Periwinkle and wintergreen.
But they sleep asleep in the icy rain,
And the wreck of summer is gray between.

Shafted bennets above the mat
Of the sodden grass, in the steady wind
Whistle a warning caveat,
As the hoarse gray month comes on behind.

A hungry gull, blown in from sea,
Comes swift and fierce like a sudden Sin.
The cold rain creeps on the leafless tree.
Ah well ! let beautiful death begin.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XVII

WHAT is this stone, unless some cry
Shall echo back and give it life?
'T is not enough that it be rife
With history, with history.

XVIII

A BEETLE bug has bit my coat
And ta'en a crescent moon,
Whether to muffle round his throat
Or felt a pair of shoon.
God knows I do not want the part.
He's welcome to 't with all my heart!

Only, poor bug, I bid him 'ware
November fierce and free!
The biting frost will soon be here
To bite more sharp than he.
If he'll return, he shall have wool
To round the crescent moon to full.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XIX

WHAT hard, bright Spirit sits beyond the
stars,
On what high seat beyond the round of space?
With what benignant, what pernicious face
Views he the blood, the laughter, and the scars?

We may not reach beyond our prison bars.
He will not bend to touch us in our place.
We can but lift our heads and strive to trace
His handiwork in what he makes or mars.

Nay, imperturbable, with other wars
Engaged than ours, "I set you in your ways
Of old," he says; "prate to me not nor praise,
But build what joy you may behind your bars."

In the cold light of evening, or of thought,
Basalt and adamant he seems, with aught
More hard, more cold, than ice or emerald;
Who says, "I have not heard of heaven or hell";
Benign, pernicious, imperturbable,
"I Am" alike by Greek and Hebrew called.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XX

DAVID AND JONATHAN

'T IS man with man in the bitter end
Whatever the love and the heart of woman;
Iron with iron, friend with friend,
The tearless eye and the handclasp human.

XXI

THE MYSTIC

"A ND so," I said, much after having striven,
"We mount close upward to the bar of
heaven;
But all our strength is spent upon the road,
And cannot take the gift when it is given.

Doubt is our attitude of mind from birth;
We cannot see, for memories of earth;
We cannot breathe the rich and rarer air,
To know the beauty and account the worth."

"And yet," one said, "you will not dare to say
A man is free to turn his face away,
Heedless of all the other friends of God,
And selfishly pursue a silent way!

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Surely the earth must ever find a place ;
Surely the human claim is no disgrace.”
— “But he must free himself who dares to mount
The highest heaven and ask to see God’s face.”

XXII

WHEN the last candle is put out,
And darkness gray falls round about,
Shall we lie placid as to-night
In a blank void of sound and sight ?
Or in the darkness shall we die,
Screaming, and all the heart a lie ?

XXIII

WHAT are the limitations hard,
Importunate, of time and space,
But fences of the prison-yard
Of earth, to keep us in our place ?

Like snares they catch us at the gate.
I beat my eager wings in vain.
Like some caged bird I learn to wait
Till death shall set me free again ;

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Content to live awhile with these,
The wards that keep me from the air,
So at the end I reach the trees
Of God, and find my freedom there.

XXIV

TO G. S.

[ON A POSTAL CARD]

IF one lack a new coat
One may still have a sister!
Like an oar to a boat,
Which without it would float,
Yet not be a good boat —
Ah, I ought to have kissed her!
If one lack a new coat
One may still have a sister.

November 4, 1890.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XXV

THE CHICKADEE'S SONG

TO G. S.

GLIMPSED now and again in his pine-tree
tower,
A chickadee sang the soft hours away.
And I could not hear what he had to say,
For I was sad,
And he was gay.
For he was glad,
And I had no power
To hear in my heart what he had to say.

As he sang to the sun and the bright-eyed flowers
And the golden air, all the world was gray.
To me all was dead in the dreary day
For I was sad
And he was gay.
And he was glad,
As the dull-eyed hours
Rolled on to the close of the dreary day.

For the eyes of the one alone with the power
To brighten and lighten the black-cap's play
Passed me by and were turned away.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

So I was sad,
 Though the bird was gay;
 Though he was glad
 In his pine-tree tower;
For her eyes passed me by and were turned away.

August 15, 1890.

XXVI

TO G. S.

WHAT shall I speak, what phrases here
 compose,
To tell the love that gathers close, and flows
Up to the very lips, but cannot pass?

.
I love you, and it is for more than this
That you have suffered. Where no fruitage is,
And naught there seems put forth, the very tree
Itself, entire, a noble fruit may be.

.
Life is but life, and who the secret finds
Of living as you live, in silence binds
(For God and those of us who understand)
About her brows a halo from the hand
Of Christ himself, and bears a lily wand.

1891.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XXVII

TO G. S.

PRAY God to give me power to keep
Life's cureless evils out of sight ;
Nor wander o'er the world and weep
The things I cannot do aright.

Let Manfred's load be bitter-borne,
And Werther cowardly outpour
His sorrows on the world. . . . I scorn
To add one weight to weakness more.

October, 1892.

XXVIII

TO H. L. S.

I WANDERED on a lonely quest ;
And deep within a dark forést
That lightened upward to the sky
A maiden, with her head borne high,
Went lightly by.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

A bending shape, a glancing eye,
Long slender limbs borne maidenly,
Bound golden hair, — she trembled lest
She fright the butterfly at rest
On either breast.

So she went on into the west
Beyond the dark-green, dim forêt
That fell to blackness — all the sky
Closed down, — when on my lips felt I
A butterfly !

XXIX

THERE are women in London and Paris and
Rome
With the light of the sun in their hair,
With the color of joy in their eyes and their lips, —
But the one that I love is n't there.

The one that I love — ah well ! . . .
I know by the heart's reminder,
By the leap in the throat and the spring in the
blood
The way I must follow to find her.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

'Tis bitter to gallop in Rotten Row
With the prettiest English girl
When your heart's afloat on the western sea
Where Atlantic breakers curl.

Then out of a hundred thousand ways
One way lies shining and bright,
One way out under the western stars
To the feet of my heart's delight.

XXX

DAY by day along the street
Many a girl I see is sweet;
But the lips that should be ripe,
Pallid like the Indian-pipe.

These, devoted and forlorn,
Brave to work and brave to mourn,
When the world is full of guile
Think to conquer with a smile.

Every day I meet some maid
Born, it seems, to be betrayed;
All the substance of desire
Burning with a paltry fire.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

These for brief and bitter passion,
Like the poppy, God will fashion ;
And the first rough wind that blows
Lays them broken down in rows.

Phyllis, when you see the frail
Fall, and courage not avail,
Is your true heart not dismayed
At the fortune of a maid ?

XXXI

THE world is crossed at sixes and at sevens,
Athwart with love.
Behind their crystal bars
The silver stars
Ache in their separate heavens,
And only these
Dear human hands on earth have ease.
To-night indeed I pity the poor trees
Even in the grove ;
For though their branches mingle,
Inwoven and crossed a moment by the breeze,
Each is forever single.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XXXII

LOVE is a life you cannot trace
Nor find by gazing in the face.
You cannot sum it, pence by pence,
Nor find it in its elements.

XXXIII

[*From the French.*]

THE spring has not so many flowers,
The yellow shore so many sands,
So many silver drops the showers
As I have sorrows at your hands.

XXXIV

DEAR heart, that in this world must live and
die,
And love, and fix your faith on one to love you,
How should I live, to think it were not I,
To stand beside, and touch and hold and prove
you.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XXXV

THE hollow chambers of the moon,
The purple barrens of the deep,
Do not so cruel silence keep
As you who put your heart to sleep.

Believe me, gold is not more pure,
The oak more steadfast in the wind,
The sun a flame more strong and sure
Than is the purpose of his mind
Who steels his heart to find you so unkind.

XXXVI

THE shad-bush, sweetheart, is in flower,
And tells her secret hour by hour.
A silent secret she imparts,
The fragrance of her heart of hearts,
Ungessed save by the initiate bee
And you, as yours, sweetheart, by me.

XXXVII

WRECK of the winter upcast into April.
Buds? — no buds on the bough as yet.
Only a hope and a promise of summer
To spring through the wet.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Just last night, as the air like water
Hung, and softened the rigid close,
Came December down out of the mountains,
And the lilacs froze.

Ice, like glass, was on all the forest ;
Shut like a lid on the steaming brook.
Blood, that sprang from the heart-roots under,
The willows forsook.

So, once more, dear heart, but only
Once, is the blossom of life betrayed.
Heart, dear heart, as I love you, tell me
You are not afraid.

XXXVIII

MY sisters have their loves, but I
Am all alone, she said.
And oh ! the weary wonder Why.
And oh ! that I were dead.
Ai me for life and love ! she saith.
She says, I am in love with death.

Ai me ! for love is very sweet,
And hearts are warm to wed ;
But burn to ashes in defeat
And loneliness, she said.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Ai me! And with her wasting breath
She says, I am in love with death.

And when my couch they shall prepare,
And come for me, she said,
They'll bring white roses for my hair,
And not the roses red.
Ai me, for life and love! she saith.
She says, I am in love with death.

XXXIX

RED ROSE AND WHITE

A RED rose climbed to the casement;
Cried, "Open to me!
My cry is the call of the passing years,
I ask for love and the dew of tears
Withheld by thee."

I broke the rose at the casement;
Cried, "Welcome to thee."
Ah, red rose dead! but I could not know
That only the pale white rose would blow
On earth for me.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XL

I MARK you coming the accustomed way,
As light as grace, your head uplift and high,
Gray subtlety of flame in either eye,
Your hair blown golden by the windy spray;
And bright about you, darting with the play
Of beams of tint most delicate and shy,
A light such as above the eastern sky
Heralds the dayspring and adorns the day;

Such crown as, when the gates of June unclose,
Plays like the veil of rose about the rose;
A snare, of grain so delicate, so mighty,
Not Ares, not Adonis might prevail.
Thou art the goddess of the golden veil,
Mistress of men, the woman Aphrodite.

XLI

THE extreme beauty and the dear delight,
Wherewith the world accosts me as I go,
Catch up the heart, and like a flake of snow
Ethereal, it dances in the light.
The music-voices of the day and night
Charm utterly. In truth, I never know
Another wish, before the various show
And concert of the hearing and the sight!

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Yet were I most unhappy if alone
Beauty without I courted and adored.
O tyrant Love, peace, then; the world is dumb!
I hear my lady calling and I come.
For love within o'er love without is lord,
And calls us with a look, a touch, a tone.

XLII

I LAUGH for the long days I see ahead,
Stretching in yellow light where we shall walk,
And pluck the full-blown roses from the stalk,
And mallows pale, and poppies deep and red.
I strive no more. Why, love, my feet are led.
I have forgot the fears and haste that balk,
And like a child that's newly learned to talk
Tell the new joy whereby I'm comforted.

For, dear, you taught me, by your graciousness,
My highest skill was to be most myself,
No turn-coat Ghibelline but the true Guelf,
Filling his faults and virtues to the brim;
No more than faithful to himself, no less
Than true to her who will be true to him.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

XLIII

[*Fragment of a Sonnet, found in a note-book.*]

IN company . . . with vital hands
You shape the stuff which is our life, and measure
With equal pulse our golden warp of pleasure,
Our scarlet woof of pain, in scarlet strands.
As if, o'erwearied in a hundred lands,
Young Aphrodite's self, undone with leisure,
Should wield the distaff and the silken treasure
Which Clotho only . . . understands.
Then, Aphrodite, sister-star and wife,
Incomprehensible, enact the god.
Favor at least one mortal with your nod.
He only has enough who has to spare.
Bless me with the sweet torment of your life,
Your love, and the dear wonder of your hair.

XLIV

WHEN Love dies, and the funeral plumes
are set,
And mourners come to take you by the hand,
Regard them not; they do not understand
Who bid you bless your sorrow and forget.
When Love has died (if Love should die!) regret

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

Will bind you broken in the former land,
And warp your life with one supreme command
To tend the dead in love's dark oubliette.

For you have loved, and all your life is altered.
And you have lost, and appetite unfed
Will drive you seeking solace with the dead.
Be there your life; and know that, having faltered,
You seek among the living folk in vain.
For love is dead. You shall not meet again.

XLV

SWAMPSCOTT over the eastern sea,
And the western wall of the sea is Lynn;
And stroke by stroke on the shingle
The waves come pounding in;
Bitter waves of the bitter sea,
With a music all their own,
With the awful charm of the Gorgon
In the look of them and the tone.
And every wave gave up its soul,
That passed in a gusty breath, —
A pulse in the air, that stirred my hair,
And whispered "Death."

Jan - 8 1901

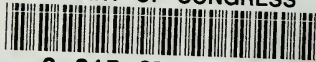
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